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Greg Gilliam knows where his students live

Do You?

Five strategies for reaching the hard-to-reach parent

See page 4

Isabella Cain and her grandson, Shawn Greshaw

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Stricter School Standards: The Next Civil Right

President's Viewpoint

Schools that pass kids who can't read or compute are flunking a basic moral test.

Bob Chase

If we want tougher academic standards for America's public schools, then we need a more tough-minded answer to the question "why?"

Pundits and politicians who argue that higher standards are essential to global competitiveness miss the point. It's not the economy, stupid. It's a moral question. It's a matter of basic civil rights.

Think about it. The United States already boasts far and away the most competitive economy in the world. And our best public school districts—most of them in affluent suburbs—are already performing at world-class levels.

Last year, for example, eighth graders in a consortium of 20 school districts in suburban Chicago took the Third International Mathematics and Science Study test.

If those 20 districts had been a separate country, the test results would have placed them second in the world—behind Singapore—in science and among the top five nations in math.

So the issue isn't whether Johnny can compete academically with Johann, Yoko, and Yuri.

The real issue is whether kids in inner-city and rural schools will be challenged and enabled to achieve at the same high levels as their best suburban counterparts.

I stress that word "enabled," because it's unfair to challenge underprivileged kids to meet higher standards unless we're willing to provide the extra resources and interventions that will help them to succeed.

The most pernicious inequality is not necessarily in funding, but rather in academic expectations, goals, and requirements—in a word, standards.

Schools without even minimal standards—schools that pass kids who can't read or compute—flunk a basic moral test.

Says E.D. Hirsch of the University of Virginia: "A systematic failure to teach all children the knowledge they need in order to understand what the next grade has to offer is the major source of avoidable injustice in our schools."

Indeed, Professor Hirsch correctly characterizes the struggle for equality of educational opportunity as "the new civil rights frontier."

Which gives rise to a disturbing historical parallel: In the 1950s and '60s, some elected officials literally stood in the schoolhouse door to deny the civil rights of minority children. They did so in the name of "states' rights."

Similarly today, some elected officials are engaged in a new "massive resistance." They steadfastly reject all efforts to create voluntary nationwide academic standards as a federal intrusion onto the traditional turf of states and localities.

In recent months, however, this wall of resistance has shown cracks. Fed up with struggling school districts, the same governors who give lip service to "local control" are imposing statewide academic standards and, in some cases, taking over management of local schools and school districts.

The scandal in American public education is not just the social promotion of failing students, but, in effect, the social promotion of entire school districts.

In the absence of objective standards for measuring their performance, badly mismanaged and underperforming districts are allowed to slide by.

Likewise, some politicians and school administrators—as well as, yes, some school employees and their unions—are allowed to skirt accountability.

The tragic upshot is that, in an era of unprecedented *de jure* civil rights, millions of young people are being denied the fundamental enabling right to a quality public education.

And this is why high academic standards for all American children is arguably the most urgent civil rights issue of our day.

Now we know that politicians can't just crack the whip and compel teachers and students to perform at higher levels. If we want higher academic standards, then we must first create high-performance public education systems.

I believe that the new union we are building at NEA—with our more rigorous emphasis on quality and professionalism—can play a major role in this transformation.

It's not acceptable just to protect our members from dysfunctional school systems. We must challenge and change those systems—both for our members' sake and for the sake of the children.

Our union must insist on schools that give every child the enabling civil right of a quality public education. We must respect every child as worthy, responsible, and capable of ambitious learning.

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NEA at a Glance

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That one out of every five dues dollars that go to NEA at the national level goes right back to the local level—to fund UniServ, the NEA program that assures every Association member local staff assistance. For more on how your dues dollars are spent, check with your local NEA affiliate or call your local UniServ office today.

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NEA Today this Month

Need a Laugh?

Then check out *Plants, Animals, and Humid Beans*, a new book filled with fun tales from the classroom. Based on *NEA Today*'s humor page, "In the Light Lane," this book is sure to bring a smile to any educator's face. To order at the NEA member price of $6.95, call the NEA Professional Library at 800/2299-4200 and use stock #1880-X-00-F.

Cover Story

4 Reaching Parents
Karen Mahurin (right) can spot a nervous parent a mile away. So this school secretary—NEA's 1997 Support Person of the Year—takes pains to establish a welcoming atmosphere at her school. Listen in as Mahurin and other educators share their strategies and secrets for reaching the parents who are notoriously hard to reach.

Cover photo by Richard Nowitz

Jeff Schultz

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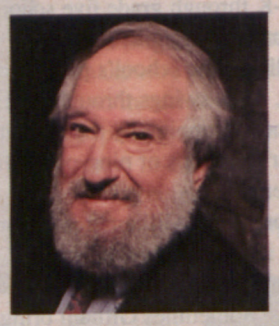

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Make It Happ

In Pennsylvania, some public school moms are paid $250 for every 100 hours they volunteer in the classroom. Other parents get free product samples including soap and cereal in exchange for participating in school activities.

At one school in Richmond, Virginia, teachers hold report cards hostage until parents pay ransom in the form of attendance at parent-teacher conferences. In other parts of the country, educators are using weekly dinners and bingo games as parent magnets.

Call them bribes, hooks, gimmicks, or just plain ol' creative ideas. The fact remains: Educators are getting desperate when it comes to involving some parents in their child's education.

Hard-to-reach families don't fall into any race or class. It's a matter of circumstance. It may be the family that doesn't have a phone or the single mom who doesn't have anyone to watch her baby while she visits your classroom.

It may be the professional parents who work such long hours. Or the parents too embarrassed by their speech or dress to walk through the school doors. Or the parents who don't understand much English.

While there are no magic solutions and no tricks that will work with all the people all the time, there are a number of effective strategies that can be incorporated into any school's overall action plan for getting hard-to-reach parents on board.

Here are just five strategies that are effective additions to any comprehensive school action plan.

Illustrations by Tod Pitts

1 Meet parents on their turf. Gregory Gilliam's beige van is a common site in the Whitcomb Court public housing projects, home to most of the 450 kids who attend Whitcomb Model school, a pre-K through grade five school in Richmond, Virginia.

Gilliam, the school's parent coordinator, often swings through the neighborhood, dropping by the recreation center for hoops or ping-pong with residents.

More often, Gilliam goes door-to-door, inviting parents to attend upcoming school meetings and social events. Sometimes Gilliam brings a student home to discuss discipline problems. Typically, he comes by to talk to parents and keep them informed about what's going on at school.

"A lot of our parents have phones that are disconnected, and this is the only way to reach them," says Gilliam, who served as a parent volunteer before joining the school staff.

Ten years ago, you could count the number of parent volunteers at Whitcomb on one hand. Today, dozens of parents are active members of the PTA and solicit resources for the school through a parent-formed community action organization.

The difference: a strategy based on home visits, trust, and ongoing relationships with parents.

"You have to show sensitivity to parents' needs and not make judgments about whatever negative circumstances you find in the household," Gilliam says. And, he says, you have to avoid presenting yourself as an authority figure.

"I don't go in and preach to parents, telling them what they need to do," he says. "I tell parents, 'I'm here to be a partner with you.'"

Gilliam then presents them with various opportunities to be involved in school issues. "The key is to show them how much their involvement benefits their child," he says. "That's the bottom line."

The bottom line for Whitcomb Model school? Fewer behavior problems and vastly improved test scores.

Jeff Schultz

Alaska secretary Karen Mahurin, left, works with kids in an open, parent-friendly environment. Below, Washington State assistant Cuong Truong bridges the language gap.

Jon Brunk

2 Make schools parent friendly. Karen Mahurin can spot a nervous parent a mile away.

As secretary at Sears Elementary School on the Kenai Peninsula in Alaska, Mahurin is often the first

en!

Five Strategies For Reaching the Hard-to-Reach Parent

point of contact between parents and the school.

"When parents walk through our door to register kids or meet with teachers, they are so overwhelmed by the entire process," Mahurin says, "They have no idea what they need to do, and it's very intimidating.

"That's why it's so important to establish a welcoming atmosphere in the school office," she adds. "There has to be a tone set among all school staff that says 'we want you here.'"

Parent involvement is largely about comfort level, so staff members at Sears Elementary have gone out of their way to make their school inviting. When parents enter the school's brightly colored office, they find comfortable couches, stuffed animals, puzzles, and books.

"I even try to dress as casually and comfortably as possible on school registration day," Mahurin says. "If parents perceive school workers as dressing better or making more money, that just puts a barrier there."

Another key to comfort: parent resource rooms that provide a cozy space for parents to meet and greet each other or work on volunteer projects without getting in the way.

"Parents are too uncomfortable hanging out in the staff lounge," says Mahurin. "When you create a place for parents, you send the message that they really belong here."

And once you get parents to school, Sears staffers learned, you don't rush them out.

"We switched from 15-minute slots for parent-teacher conferences to half-hour meetings," Mahurin says. "Before, a bell would ring to signal time was up, and parents felt rushed."

Now, she adds, "We stretch the conferences out over three-and-a-half days so we can spend more time."

3 Bridge the language gap. When parents call Phantom Lake Elementary School in Bellevue, Washington, they can listen to school announcements in Spanish, Russian, Chinese, Laotian, or Vietnamese.

With help from a special software program, they can get regular messages from school in their native language. And they can register their kids with help from how-to videotapes in six languages.

Phantom Lake is one of a growing number of schools that aren't allowing language differences to broaden the rift between parents and school staff.

To deal with the increasing numbers of immigrant children, schools across the country are searching for ways to connect with non-English-speaking families.

Some send materials home in several languages. Others make sure report cards and materials that explain grades are sent home in a family's native language.

Most hire more support staff who can reach out to families and serve as translators.

Cuong Truong, a Vietnamese immigrant and instructional assistant at Alderwood Elementary School in Bellingham, Washington, translates report cards and parent-teacher conferences for almost 30 Vietnamese families in the city's 12 elementary schools.

"Parents want to talk to teachers about their children and come to school, but the language barrier makes it difficult," says Truong. "They don't know how to express their ideas. They want to, but they can't.

"If the school wants to do the best job for the students," he says, "it must have the best communication between school and parents—and that includes parents who don't speak English well."

4 Involve parents in decision making. When James Comer first began his pioneering work in parent-school partnerships in 1968, educators told him, "The parents should raise them. We will teach them."

Some 30 years later, Comer marvels, "There's so much more recognition that parents have an important role in the work of the school."

Hundreds of schools across the country are successfully getting parent input on important school decisions using what has become known as "the Comer model."

The approach encourages schools to create governance management teams composed of parents, teachers, support staff, and mental health officials.

Together, team members develop a comprehensive plan for the school that sets goals for academic and social standards.

When parents are involved in crucial decisions that affect how their children learn, students thrive academically, mentally, and socially, says Comer, now director of the Yale Child Study Center School Development Program.

When it works well, he says, "there should be no fault and no blame in the process. The main focus should be on what's good for the children."

But involving parents only works, he cautions, when "parents have real roles and real responsibilities in the decisions that affect their child's learning. It can't be make-work."

So how do you get parents involved on these teams to begin with?

"You can't go directly to parents who are overwhelmed and just talk to them about being involved," Comer says. "The entire school staff must be working in a way that fosters trust.

"Then, the parents who are most distrustful and overwhelmed will begin to come in."

To contact Comer, see page 6.

5 Help parents help their children. "The number one thing we hear from parents," says NEA's Warlene Gary, "is they want to know how to help their kids do homework and become better learners."

So, for the past three years, NEA's Center for the Revitalization of Urban Education has been providing hundreds of parents around the country with training in how to create effective learning environments in the home.

Through NEA's Family-School-Community Partnership program, parents in public housing projects in Nashville, Tennessee, are learning how to help their children with homework.

And in Broward County, Florida, NEA has trained parents in how to resolve conflict in the home.

There are literally thousands of ways schools can help parents help their children.

At Mauphin Elementary in Louisville, Kentucky, teachers like Judy Elmer use the MegaSkills program to help children develop confidence, motivation, and self-esteem. After school, teachers train parents in how to teach MegaSkills at home.

"When children find consistency in what is being taught and expected at home and in school, their performance improves," Elmer says.

To make it easy for parents to come, Mauphin offers evening workshops and provides workshop materials in several languages. Other schools provide transportation to make workshops even more accessible.

—Karen Gutloff

Is Parent Involvement Your Job?

Just how much responsibility should teachers bear for getting more parents involved in school activities?

After all isn't managing the classroom enough of a load to carry?

Larry Decker, an education professor and co-author of *The Hard-to-Reach Parent*, has some choice words for educators on this subject.

"The evidence is so overwhelming about the benefits of parent involvement for students," Decker says, "that for educators to not even attempt it is engaging in professional malpractice."

Decker doesn't lay the blame solely at the feet of educators. He points out that parent involvement simply is not part of most American schools' value systems.

"School administrators set the climate," Decker says. "If administrators aren't encouraging and supporting teachers in this area, then educators have an easy out."

Adds Decker: "I tell principals all the time, 'If parent involvement is not part of your value system, I hope you retire early.'"

Decker laments that parent involvement isn't a part of most preservice or in-service training programs.

"It's easy to ignore," he says. "These kinds of programs aren't part of the assessment system for teachers or principals."

David Zakibowski

Larry Decker

For educators who want to make parent outreach a part of their school value system, Decker suggests multiple strategies.

"Some schools think if they just put out a newsletter it will have an impact," he says. "But one-way communication doesn't work with the hard-to-reach parent. It takes face-to-face contact with lots of follow-up."

It's critical, Decker adds, that educators give up the idea that poor families are apathetic about education.

"All evidence," he says, "shows that low-income and less educated parents want to help in their children's education. Lack of knowledge about *how* to help can't be equated with lack of interest."

In the end, Decker says, educators should strive for more than "parent programs."

"Ideally, you want parent-school-community programs," he says. "Those are the most powerful."

What do you think of Decker's assessment?

Are educators who don't reach out to parents guilty of "professional malpractice?" If you'd like to voice your opinion and hear others, join Decker in a live, online chat on Tuesday, October 21 at 8 p.m. ET.

Visit *NEA Today*'s Web site—www.nea.org/neatoday—to learn how to participate.

Resources

Building Parent Partnerships

NEA Teacher-to-Teacher Books. Six classroom teachers discuss successful programs that provide parenting skills, encourage family involvement in middle school programs, and offer assistance to families with social service needs. Stock #2911-9-00-3. $7.95 for NEA members, $9.95 for non-members. Call 800/229-4200.

Parents and Schools: From Visitors to Partners

NEA Professional Library. Learn the secrets of many schools that have created parent involvement programs—including how to avoid their false starts. Stock #1856-7-00-BT. $11.95 for NEA members, $12.95 for non-members. Call 800/229-4200.

The Hard-to-Reach Parent: Old Challenges, New Insights

Larry Decker and Renee White-Clark. National Community Education Association. A look at stereotypes, barriers, and misconceptions involving parents. $11.95 plus $3 s&h. Contact the National Community Education Association, 3929 Old Lee Highway, Suite 910A, Fairfax, VA 22030, 703/359-8973.

Developing Home-School Partnerships: From Concept to Practice

Teachers College Press. Includes a review of research, policy, and practice in the field of school and family partnerships, analysis of parent involvement models, and dozens of practical ideas for creating programs. $17.95. Contact Teachers College Press, 1234 Amsterdam Ave., New York, NY 10027, 212/678-3929.

Fostering Home-School Cooperation: Involving Language Minority Families as Partners in Education

National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education. Provides practical strategies for developing home-school partnerships with non-English-speaking parents. $12.50. Contact NCBE, 1118 22nd St., N.W., Washington, DC 20037, 202/467-0867.

Parent Organizations Can Help

As the need for parent-school partnerships has grown, so has the list of organizations dedicated to the cause.

■ **Home Instruction Program for Preschool Youngsters** (HIPPYUSA): Paraprofessionals visit parents at home, demonstrating how to help children ages 3-5 get ready for kindergarten. Contact Miriam Westheimer, executive director, HIPPY USA, c/o Teachers College, Box 113, 525 West 120th St., New York, NY 10027, 212/678-3500. Go to www.c3pg.com.

■ **League of Schools Reaching Out:** Each League school develops a parent center, parent outreach program, and teacher research team that develops strategies to increase parent involvement. Schools must apply for membership. Contact Diane Nackley, Institute for Responsive Education, Northeastern University, 605 Commonwealth Ave., Boston, MA 02215, 617/373-2595. Go to www2.dac.neu.edu/Units/ArtsSci/IRE.

■ **National PTA:** With millions of members nationwide, this national organization identifies and supports family information and resource centers across the country that focus on children's needs. Contact National PTA, 330 N. Wabash Ave., Suite 2100, Chicago, IL 60611-3690, 312/670-6782. On the Web: www.pta.org.

■ **School Development Program:** Some 400 schools in 65 districts are using the principles of this program, founded by Yale's James Comer. The program emphasizes governance teams composed of staff, parents, and administrators. Contact James Comer, Yale University Child Study Center, School Development Program, 47 College St., Suite 212, New Haven, CT 06510, 203/737-1020. Go to info.med.yale.edu/comer.

■ **National African-American Parent Involvement Day:** On February 9, hundreds of thousands of African-American parents in cities nationwide will visit their child's school. For an implementation manual ($5 s&h), brochures, and other materials, contact NAAPID, 377 Textile Rd., Ypsilanti, MI, 48197, 800/351-4097. Go to www.personal.umich.edu/~splendid/NAAPID.html.

■ **National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education:** The organization shares information on parent involvement programs and encourages educators to create strong partnerships for children's learning. Contact NCPIE, Box 39, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036.

■ **For more listings:** Go to "Extra! Extra!" on *NEA Today*'s Web site, at www.nea.org/neatoday.

At the National Level

NEA Forms an Historic Alliance

NEA is part of a broad-based national coalition to improve public schools. Wait 'til you see who we're working with...

Can you *imagine* what would happen if you put school boards, unions, parents, principals, superintendents, and every other education player in the same room to work on the same project?

Lots of good stuff, actually.

In the past, leaders of the nation's top education groups have united to lobby Congress for more education funding—and been successful.

Coalition efforts to improve public education at the national and local levels, however, haven't always lived up to their potential.

Joe Di Dio

Meetings of the Forum of Educational Organization Leaders were "often rife with adversarial sniping, ego trips, organizational parochialism, competition, and general crankiness," groans one veteran participant, NEA Executive Director Don Cameron.

That's about to change.

Leaders of the NEA and 11 other national education groups (see list, above) are forming a new organization around a single goal: making public schools even better.

The new group—renamed the Learning First Alliance—has a constitution and bylaws, paid staff, and a mission.

"We are committed to an action agenda based on research," says Shirley Sagawa, the group's new executive director.

"Each time we take on an issue," she pledges, "we'll reach out to the best researchers in the country and work to bridge the gap between experts and practitioners."

Focusing first on the areas of math and reading, the new group will analyze problems, then use the leverage of its network—including every stakeholder in education from teaching colleges to PTAs—to devise real-world solutions.

Sagawa points to the high numbers of third graders who can't read—40 percent—as an example of a solvable problem the group hopes to take on.

"There are systemic reasons why many third graders can't read," she explains. "In a given school, teachers may not have had enough training. There may not be enough time devoted to reading. The curriculum may just not be strong enough. Or there may be 17 other reasons.

"But when all of us come together," Sagawa stresses, "we can look at what we need to do differently."

The Alliance will couple this holistic approach to problem solving with unifying goals—high expectations for students, a safe, nurturing, learning environment, and more parent and community involvement in schools.

Says Sagawa: "Our work is an effort to say: We may disagree, but let's change what we can agree on, change our jobs for the better, and help children learn."

At press time, leaders of the Learning First Alliance had scheduled both a September public launch and a January summit of its affiliates.

"This will be the first time all of our governance boards have met," says NEA Assistant Executive Director Tony Rollins. "We'll be sending a critical message: These groups can and are working *together* to improve public schools."

"Working together, we and our new partners stand a much greater chance of ensuring a healthy and vibrant public school system for the children of America."
—NEA Executive Director Don Cameron

United for Quality Education

The new forum of education leaders brings together the national organizations that represent all the key school constituencies at the local and state level:

- National Education Association
- American Federation of Teachers
- National Congress of Parents and Teachers
- Education Commission of the States
- Council of Chief State School Officers
- American Association of School Administrators
- National School Boards Association
- National Association of State School Boards
- National Association of Elementary School Principals
- National Association of Secondary School Principals
- American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education
- Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development

For More Information

To learn more about the Learning First Alliance, call 202/822-8405, ext. 40. Look for updates on the group's activities in future issues of NEA Today.

Heroes & Zeroes

Kudos to both Jennifer Diebel and former NEA President Keith Geiger.

Bill Love

Diebel, winner of a $5,300 Keith Geiger Scholarship from the Michigan Education Association, is now a music education student at Central Michigan University. Geiger now directs the Office of Academic Programs at the United States Information Agency.

Move over, Joe Camel. RJR Nabisco has hit a new low with its promotion of "naked"—no additives—cigarettes. The National Center for Tobacco-Free Kids calls the new Winstons and the ads promoting them "absurd and deceptive," particularly for minors who may think the new cigarettes won't harm them. A better ad, says one anti-tobacco activist: "All of the cancer and none of the taste."

Apples for the techno-gift horse who left parcels for thousands of Rhode Island teachers this past summer. As part of a $5 million education initiative, the Rhode Island Foundation is giving 3,000 teachers laptops and computer training.

A shivering mass of cellulite would be too good for supermodel Linda Evangelista, who gets the Books-or-Looks?-Award. "It was God who made me so beautiful," she said recently. "If I weren't, then I'd be a teacher."

AP/Wide World

Santa—a.k.a. businessman Tom DuPree, Jr.—recently struck in Morgan County, Georgia, a small community east of Atlanta. DuPree pushed teachers to dream big—and give him their wish-lists. He then provided every single item on the lists—from a computer-generated keyboard to a plastic cadaver—to local schools. Over the years, DuPree's given more than $10 million to the local school system.

On Capitol Hill

A Balance In Favor of Kids

The new federal budget agreement, enacted into law in August, includes a five-year, $26.5 billion increase for education and related programs. The law also provides $24 billion for health care for 5 million low-income children. NEA has urged President Clinton to work with school employees to identify kids eligible for Medicaid coverage. *What you can do: Work through your NEA state affiliate to ensure that eligible children receive the broadest, most comprehensive health coverage.*

Vouchers with Vengeance

NEA lobbying helped defeat an amendment to the balanced budget agreement that would have funneled billions of dollars in tax breaks to private K-12 schools. But expect to see a raft of private tuition voucher initiatives this fall—tacked onto the Juvenile Justice Act reauthorization and the education and District of Columbia appropriations bills. *What you can do: Urge your members of Congress to oppose any amendment that subsidizes private schools.*

Title I, IDEA Need More

In Fiscal Year 1998, Congress is expected to increase education spending by $2.5 billion to $3 billion. *What you can do: Urge lawmakers to pass an education appropriations bill now that provides substantial increases for both Title I and the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act.*

A Window of Opportunity

Both the Higher Education Act and the Perkins Vocational Education Act are up for reauthorization this fall. In the revised higher ed law, NEA is seeking expansion and improvement of professional development programs for teachers. In the updated voc ed law, NEA will work to maintain voc ed as a stand-alone program—not as part of a job training and workfare block grant to states. *What you can do: Urge lawmakers to expand and improve professional development programs in the Higher Education Act.*

Computer Illiterate, Are Ya?

Thanks to bipartisan support for teacher technology training, some money may be coming your way.

Through educational technology, students in Union City, California, are "learning how to find information, and a lot of them are becoming classroom leaders—especially girls—who might not have otherwise," says teacher Liz Jordan.

It's all happening because Jordan and her colleagues in the New Haven Unified School District have learned to integrate technology into the curriculum and to shift their classroom roles on a dime.

"Sometimes you're a guide, sometimes you're a teacher," says Jordan, who has served as a curriculum leader, mentor, and member of several district technology planning committees.

Fortunately, members of Congress in both parties now grasp the importance of teachers in the drive—far, far from completion—to bring technology to American classrooms. Consider what's now in the legislative hopper:

- Senator Patty Murray (D-Washington) and Congresswoman Connie Morella (R-Maryland) are prime sponsors of a bill—S.351 and H.R.1572—requiring that federally funded professional development programs include technology classes, and that states incorporate technology requirements in teacher training content and performance standards.

The bill also encourages higher education institutions to incorporate technology into their education programs.

- The emerging Fiscal Year 1998 budget—increasing total education spending by $2.8 billion in the House and $2.6 billion in the Senate—would more than double the size of the $200 million fund that now provides state grants for hardware, software, teacher training in technology, and integration of technology into the curriculum.
- The budget would also boost funding for school district/business technology partnership grants from the current $57 million to $75 million in the House and $106 million in the Senate. The Senate version would set aside $30 million of the increase for teacher training in technology.

All of these proposed grant increases—House and Senate leaders were expected to arrive at final, compromise numbers by late September—"demonstrate a strong bipartisan consensus that technology in schools will not work if teachers are not adequately trained in its use or how to integrate it into the curriculum," says NEA lobbyist Joel Packer.

Helping galvanize Congress was a recent study by the U.S. Office of Technology Assessment showing that 56 percent of teachers feel they need training just to adequately use a personal computer.

In fact, Senator Murray—a former teacher—told colleagues when outlining her bill that, "School districts across the country spend less than 15 percent of their technology budgets on teacher training."

So where does training begin once your school district finally grabs the funds and the right equipment?

"It's important to first train teachers in the computer basics," says Liz Jordan, now on leave from Alvarado Elementary School, "then let them work it through to see how to integrate things."

Union City teachers have benefited from several technology bond issues, but Jordan stresses that they've kept training costs down by using highly experienced colleagues as instructors—in Wednesday morning classes, individual pull-out sessions, and, most recently, summer institutes.

When it comes to budgeting technology dollars, she recommends a unified system, a technology coordinator, and an "integration specialist who can be taken out of the classroom to work with other teachers on site."

Don't forget, she adds, to factor in lots of time and creativity, "because technology is changing so rapidly training must be ongoing."

Finally, Jordan reminds lawmakers, "There's never enough money for teacher training, and that training is what makes it all happen for students."

For More Information

For an update on the legislative proposals in NEA's Quality Public Schools Agenda, go to www.nea.org/qpsa.

Bob Riha, Jr.

California kindergarten teacher Liz Jordan says teacher technology training is key to unlocking the potential of classroom computers.

The Bottom Line

Poor kids: Three in five single-parent households in the United States currently fall below the poverty line. Overall, one in four American children under 18 live in poverty, the highest rate, says the United Nations, of any industrialized nation.

Teen explosion: Elementary and secondary school enrollment this year will hit a record 52.2 million students. High schools will see an 800,000-student increase. Over the next 10 years, high school enrollment is expected to jump 13 percent.

More teachers, schools: The nation will need to hire 2 million new teachers by the year 2007, over a quarter-million in California alone, reports Education Secretary Richard Riley. Rising enrollments and retirements are both driving the number of new hires.

Book ban: A new law in the Brazilian state of Rio de Janeiro makes it a crime for elementary students to carry books that weigh more than 10 percent of their body weight. Overstuffed backpacks, say officials, are creating back problems for children.

At the Bargaining Table

These Days Belong to Us

A Pennsylvania NEA affiliate bargains non-instructional days—and teachers decide how to use them.

Through some creative collective bargaining, NEA members in Quakertown, Pennsylvania, have taken charge of and redefined professional development.

For the 290 members of the Quakertown Community Education Association, professional development now means peer teaching sessions, after-school raps on conflict resolution, time spent revising curriculum, and much more.

Three years ago, Quakertown teachers agreed to add 12 days to the school calendar for the purpose of continuing teacher education.

Now teachers have 20 non-instructional days a year, 15 for largely self-directed professional development activities.

"We gained a lot of room to be creative and expand," stresses Sue Stauffer, a guidance counselor at Quakertown Elementary School.

"It's exciting to be in charge of your own professional development, to be encouraged to grow."

And the teachers—among the highest paid in the state—"wanted to give something back," says local Association President David Tyson, who teaches social studies at Quakertown Community Senior High School.

Now a commission—including teachers, administrators, and a school board member—recommends a school calendar and decides on proposals for using non-instructional time.

Many requests for non-instructional days come from individual schools, departments, and groups of teachers. Close to half come from individual teachers and other professionals.

Teachers hold a 5-4 majority on the panel, but "there has not been one party-line vote," says Tyson. In fact, he notes, of more than 700 proposals submitted to the commission, only 17 have been denied.

John Whitehead

Quakertown NEA members, from left, David Tyson, Sue Stauffer, and Debbie Scheetz, have up to 15 days a year for teacher-directed professional development activities.

The commission currently spreads 15 non-instructional days across the calendar, mostly in conjunction with holidays, when school is not in session. Teachers can also use five non-instructional days during the summer.

Examples of past and proposed uses of non-instructional days include:

- A lawyer speaking to staff on legal issues such as sexual harassment.
- Planning for school health fairs.
- Teacher-to-teacher workshops on both reading and student portfolios.
- Establishment of an elementary school peer mediation program.
- A weekly after-school teachers meeting on in-house issues like remediation and conflict resolution.

Quakertown teachers have also used this contract benefit to attend a raft of courses and workshops, on everything from the Internet to ways to better work with disabled students. In addition, they've visited other districts to observe or present workshops.

"It amazes me what teachers have gone to," says commission chair Debbie Scheetz, an English teacher at Quakertown Community Senior High.

Students, especially, have benefited from non-instructional days. Remedial reading has been taught in the summer to first and second graders, resulting in "gains made instead of the usual seasonal losses," says Stauffer.

Students also are taking more frequent and better designed field trips. One teacher visited the Baltimore Aquarium to prepare for taking students, so it would be "directed instruction, rather than just turning them loose," says Sheetz.

New teachers, too, are profiting from this program. Starting this fall, they'll have 35 non-instructional days each year for staff development.

All new teachers will take a three-day graduate course on the district's teaching philosophy and strategies and then have a hand in designing a program for their other extra days.

That's a far better induction than the greeting of old, Tyson says, "when new teachers were told, 'Here's your book. We'll see you in September.'"

For More Information

Call David Tyson at 215/453-1573. And check out Teachers Take Charge of Their Learning, *a report from NEA's National Foundation for the Improvement of Education, at www.nfie.org/takechar.htm.*

A Friendlier Way To Talk

In Utah, 71 percent of teacher contracts were settled before the end of the 1996-97 school year, thanks in some cases to "mutual gains" bargaining. "We were all working for the same purpose," says Salt Lake Teachers Association President Elaine Tzourtzouklis.

A Raise at Last

Following a stressful two years of demonstrations, leafleting, and informational picketing, members of the Davis (California) Teachers Association ratified a contract that gives them their first raise since the 1994-95 school year. The pact provides raises of 4 percent for 1995-96, 3.85 percent for 1996-97, and 4.15 percent for 1997-98.

No Vetoes This Time

The Biddeford (Maine) Education Association and school board have ended a contract fight that started in 1994 when Mayor Jim Gratello vetoed a tentative agreement. The parties recently signed a new pact that increases salaries by 8.4 percent over three years and boosts starting pay for a teacher with a BA from $21,000 to $22,780.

Moving Up in Camden

It took seven meetings with a mediator, but the Camden (New Jersey) Education Association reached an agreement last March that moves every employee a step on the salary guide. Moreover, certified staff will receive an average 12.5 percent increase over three years, while support staff receive an average 16.25 percent hike.

Harmony in Nashville

In the last school year, members of the Metro Nashville (Tennessee) Education Association had to "work to the clock" to win a new contract. This year, with a new school director in place, MNEA and the school board were quick to reach a 1997-98 agreement that includes a 3.5 percent salary hike, plus gradual increases in the district's contributions to insurance premiums.

A nation of readers: Iceland is the world's most bookish nation, with 537 new books published annually for every 100,000 people. The United States and Russia, with 20 new books each per 100,000 people, rank toward the bottom of the developed nation list.

Murder and mayhem: Local TV news programs devote 15 times more minutes to crime-related stories than to education coverage, says a new study conducted earlier this year. In all, local TV stations devote only 2 percent of their available minutes to schools.

Computing power: The average number of students per computer in America's public schools is down to 7.3, a drop of 12 students per machine since 1992. Wyoming boasts the best ratio, with an average of one computer for every four students.

Pro-union: A new poll from a leading business publisher shows that Americans want unions to play a greater role in America. Young adults 18-34 are the age group most favorable to unions. They support a greater union role by a 51-36 percent margin.

At the Local Level

Let's Organize Everybody!
They're not only forming a new NEA local affiliate, teachers in Tishomingo, Oklahoma, have developed a plan to organize their entire community. Over 50 people—teachers, parents, students, administrators, school board members, and newspaper staff—attended a founding meeting of the teacher-organized Tishomingo Education Association and Children's Helpers (TEACH). *For more information, call Teresa Neal at 405/371-3271.*

Charter Teachers Join NEA
In Dover, Delaware, eight teachers at the grade 7-12 Positive Outcomes Charter School—all public employees—have voted for Association representation. These new NEA members work with students who are at risk of academic failure due to diagnosable psychiatric conditions.

Voiceless No More
In Greenville, Illinois, 80 school support employees in the Bond County Unit #2 School District have voted to join the NEA. Before the election, seven support staff leaders from Southern Illinois local affiliates went to Greenville to testify about the need for a voice on the job and the power of collective bargaining.

More Members Mean Clout
Despite an anticipated 12 percent membership loss from retirements, the CTA/NEA faculty local in the North Orange County (California) Community College District has signed up most of the 505 instructors working on two area campuses. One immediate payoff: The NEA local affiliate and district have agreed on a plan to correct built-in inequities in the salary structure.

All the Comforts of Home
Helen and John Zappia, retired members of the Organization of DeKalb (Georgia) Educators, have donated their home office for the local affiliate's use. In the deal, ODE leaders get a fax, computer, modem, and an occasional plate of John Zappia's special lasagna.

No Questions, No Input . . .

That's what school administrators in one Arkansas district expect from staff.

On July 1, the same day China shut down Hong Kong's democratically elected legislature, an Arkansas school district scuttled its most effective vehicle for *workplace* democracy.

Effective that day, by decree of the North Little Rock school board, more than 20 years of teacher collective bargaining came to an end.

The replacement: a purely advisory "Personnel Policy Committee" of five teachers and three administrators.

China signaled its crackdown far in advance. By contrast, the North Little Rock Classroom Teachers Association was given less than three hours' notice on June 10—the day after school ended—that the school board was convening a special meeting to "vote on a Personnel Policy Committee."

Such a committee is mandated by law for the 300-plus Arkansas school districts without collective bargaining. The state has no bargaining law.

In violation of Arkansas' Freedom of Information Act, the seven-member board—prepped by one-on-one meetings with Superintendent James Smith—read aloud pre-typed motions and seconds, and unanimously voted to withdraw recognition of the union and not renegotiate its contract.

No witnesses, including 50 Association members who stood to oppose this motion, were allowed to speak.

Most likely, the school board will get away with these antics—for now.

"Until we're able to pass bargaining laws, Southern states will always face this issue," fumes North Little Rock bargaining chair Louene Lipsmeyer, a teacher at Central Elementary.

But that doesn't mean that North Little Rock's 400 NEA members have given up—not by a long stretch.

After the board action, more than 200 teachers packed a church to unanimously pass a vote of no confidence in the superintendent and school board.

Staton Breidenthal

North Little Rock NEA leaders, from left, Sherry Smith, Jon Robbins, Nancy Sheehan, and UniServ Director Peggy Nabors, will fight for the right to collective bargaining.

And NEA members collected enough signatures to petition for a special board meeting—just to tell 'em off.

Mauri Douglass, a teacher of the gifted and talented, told the board, "I want the Association to speak for me when policies and salaries are negotiated. I am the Association, and so are so many committed, hard working teachers who never come before you."

Douglass, one of many formerly complacent members who have joined the campaign to regain bargaining rights, went to the heart of the issue.

"The superintendent and board don't want an effective teacher voice, period," charges UniServ Director Peggy Nabors. "They want no questions, no input, and no controversy."

Ironically, school officials are getting all of the above—thanks to lively press coverage of their actions.

Blasting the school board's no-discussion meeting of June 10, the *North Little Rock Times* wrote that a topic like union decertification "deserves a full public hearing with lots of discussion and plenty of input from teachers, administrators, parents, students, and the general public."

North Little Rock teachers are gaining sympathy from taxpayers concerned about the board's secretive behavior. And they're receiving strong support from other Arkansas NEA local affiliates and the state AFL-CIO.

But nobody can fight this battle for them. That's why North Little Rock members backed their own candidates in September's school board election and captured the five teacher slots on the new Personnel Policy Committee.

What drives them?

"Through the years, we've won things inch-by-inch through negotiations—including raises for longevity and educational improvement, tuition reimbursement, a sick leave bank, and progressive discipline," says Jon Robbins, a chemistry teacher and local Association president.

"Collective bargaining," he says, "is a *very* valuable asset for improving public education. It's made our district among the best."

For More Information

For details, or to extend support to North Little Rock NEA members, send a fax to 501/758-7181.

The Bottom Line

Testing: School officials with responsibility for 20 percent of the nation's elementary students have so far agreed to administer the Clinton Administration's new national test in reading for fourth graders. The exam will be ready in 1999.

High school majors: New York may become the first state to require students to declare a "major." Under the pending plan, all students would have to take five or six courses in one field of study, with choices ranging from foreign languages to health.

Corporate taxes: In a low-turnout referendum, Cleveland voters rejected a proposal to limit special tax breaks for business. Localities are increasingly granting such tax breaks —which squeeze revenues for schools —to stimulate economic growth.

Dropouts: Hispanic teens are leaving school at significantly higher rates than other students. Thirty percent of Hispanic youth between 16 and 24 do not have a high school degree. The rates for non-Hispanic whites and Blacks: 9 and 12 percent.

On the Cutting Edge

Support Staff with a Voice

Members of the Wyoming (Michigan) Educational Support Staff Association not only have a seat on school-based improvement councils, they have a voice equal to that of teachers, administrators, and parents. Local President Gary Vanderveen gives the credit to trust, teamwork, and a good relationship with the school board.

One Friend at a Time

The 16-local York County (Pennsylvania) Coordinating Council reaches out to its community by sponsoring a scholarship fund for future teachers and a fundraising bike-a-thon for the Association for Retarded Citizens. Members also hand out apples and brochures to shoppers at area malls.

Standards—and Spaghetti

The Culpeper County (Virginia) Education Association and school district recently offered free dinner and child care to entice area residents to a meeting about the state's new Standards of Learning. "We wanted parents to be aware of and feel more comfortable with these more rigorous standards," says organizer Laurel Booth, a teacher.

Not Open to Interpretation

Members of the Somerset County (New Jersey) Education Association are communicating with non-English speaking parents with message cards in six languages—from Gujarati to Vietnamese. Teachers check boxes with comments like "shows improvement" or "needs to complete homework," and the parents take it from there.

Underground In-Service

The school district has rejected their request for in-service training, but that hasn't stopped members of the Cairo (Illinois) Association of Educational Support Personnel from schooling themselves. They raise money for speakers and meet after school once a month for computer training, leadership workshops, talks on hot topics, and more.

. . . Your Questions, *Please*

An Arizona district creates a new model by linking labor-management relations to student success.

Just 80 miles from the Grand Canyon, there's another wonder of sorts—the Mount Elden Middle School in Flagstaff, Arizona.

The school recently won an "A-Plus" award for educational excellence from the Arizona Department of Education, the Arizona Educational Foundation, and Bank One.

Those lauding Mount Elden often cite its zero-tolerance discipline policy, parental involvement efforts, and open door to the community. They note its student test scores, use of integrated teaching teams in core subjects, and the school's smart use of funds and classroom technology.

But most fail to note one element that's absolutely crucial to Mount Elden's success: 90 percent of teachers and support staff there are NEA members—and active ones, at that.

"In our A-plus application," principal Russ Furnow points out, "we made it clear that we have tremendous Association leadership here, and that this active participation is very positive for the administration and the students."

"We are a team here," says Flagstaff Education Association President Chris Coudert, who teaches social studies at Mount Elden. "And I don't mean just the fact that we team teach.

"There is no segregation of support staff, teachers, and administrators," Coudert says. "We all work together—that's what got us here."

Mount Elden staffers regard their Association as a vehicle for both due process and professionalism. That attitude has led to key advances in education for area students, including:

■ **Top quality teachers.** "Our responsibility is to help teachers improve," Coudert says, "or help them find another job."

Thanks to a teacher-driven district-wide peer assistance program, if educators encounter problems on the job, the Association works with the principal to get them back on track—through mentoring, coaching, helping write lesson plans, and, if needed, a performance improvement plan.

■ **Better decision making.** Each of Flagstaff's 17 schools has a strong site council of parents, employees, and community members headed by an *elected* chairperson.

Should a principal attempt to override the shared decision making process, any stakeholder can appeal to a "district support team"—on which FEA is represented—for mediation.

■ **A cooperative relationship with administrators that keeps the focus on quality.** FEA leaders often "do lunch" with school board members, work closely with the superintendent, and try to settle grievances at the school level through mediation.

"In the past eight years, we've always resolved conflicts at the superintendent's level, and in an amiable way," says Coudert.

■ **Constructive community involvement in the schools**. FEA belongs to the local Chamber of Commerce, where it educates business leaders on the need for competitive teacher salaries, the pitfalls of merit pay, and how the district's successful peer mentoring and coaching program promotes professionalism.

One payoff of such involvement: Local businessman Joel Goldberger recently gave free, unlimited Internet time to Flagstaff schools.

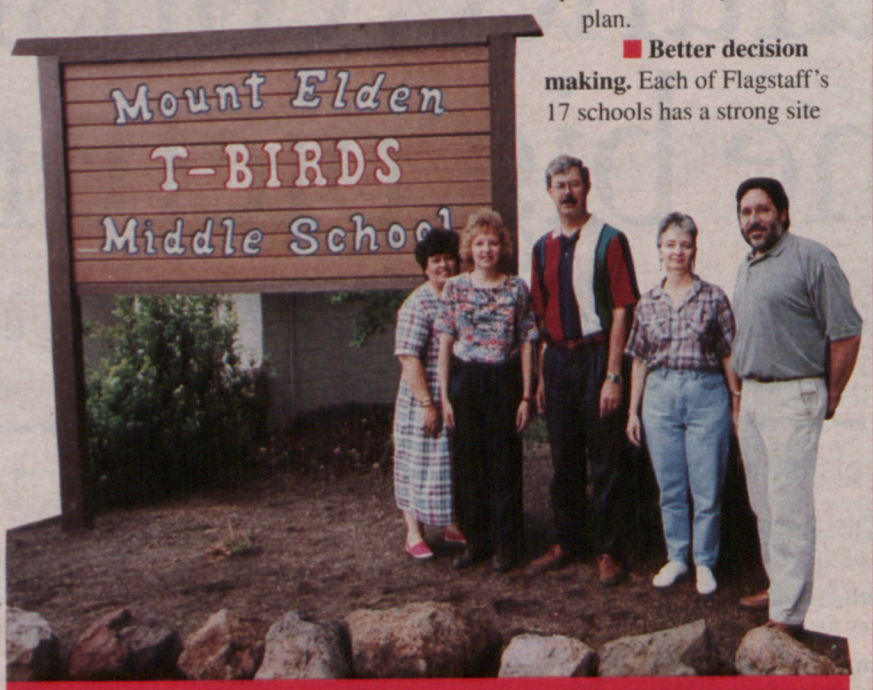
At FEA's recommendation, the Arizona Education Association last year honored five local business leaders who donated for classroom needs.

■ **A cooperative school board.** The Flagstaff Education Association has a large Political Action Committee that recommends school board candidates, then works hard to elect them.

The result, says Coudert, is a school board "that's amiable and understands teachers' problems."

Listen to educators, and they'll pitch in even *more*. "When you have involved teachers who feel respected," Coudert adds, "you have better teachers and higher student achievement."

—With help from Arizona Education Association staff member Dina Clarke



Sean Openshaw

Leaders of the Flagstaff Education Association are proud of their role in a middle school's noteworthy success.

For More Information

Fax Chris Coudert, NEA local affiliate president, at 520/773-1004.

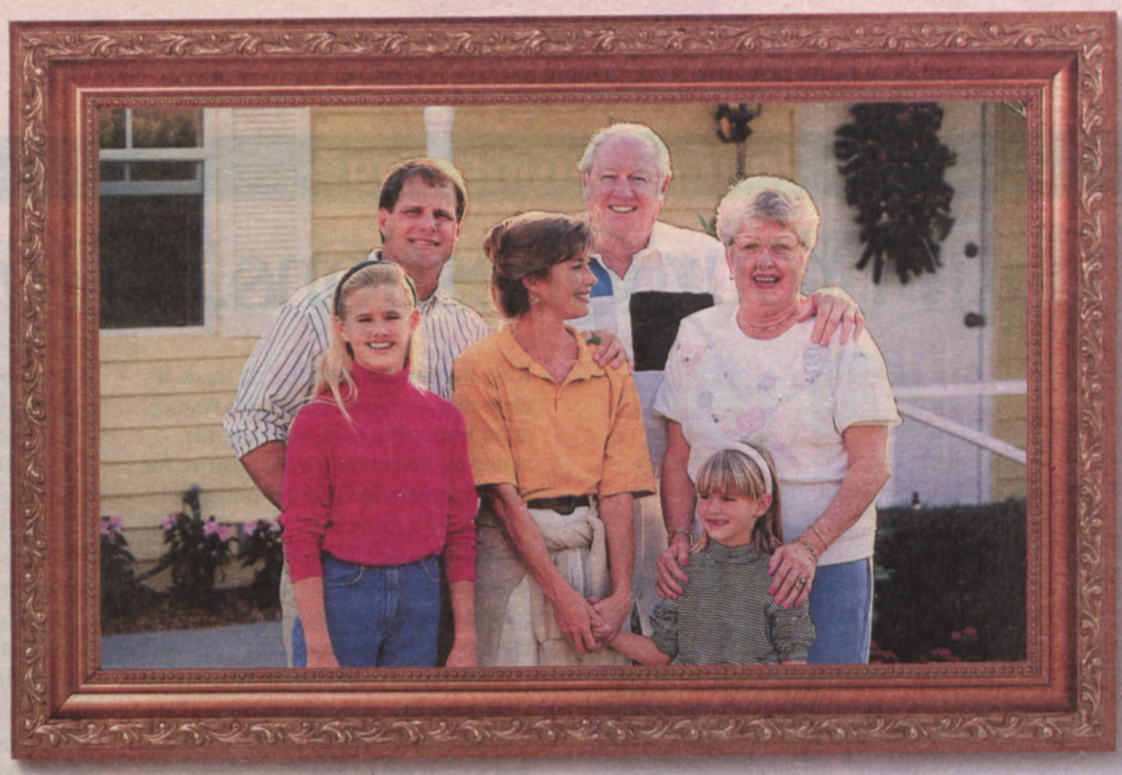
The Bottom Line

Spanking hurts: A new two-year study suggests that children spanked at home are more likely to be disobedient at school and bully other kids. Researchers at the University of New Hampshire tracked over 800 families with children under 10.

Money matters: Spending dollars to lower class size raises school achievement, notes new research from the Educational Testing Service. Fourth graders in smaller-than-average classes are six months further along academically than kids in larger classes.

Grades count: Colleges and universities are tending to place more weight on high school coursework and class rank—and less on SAT or ACT test scores. Since 1994, the number of colleges no longer requiring SATs or ACTs has jumped by almost 100.

More ads: Textbook covers are a hot new buy for advertisers looking to reach students. One Massachusetts company sells display space on book covers, then hands out the covers free. The cost to advertisers: about $130,000 for a million book covers.



When you're considering insurance, consider the big picture.

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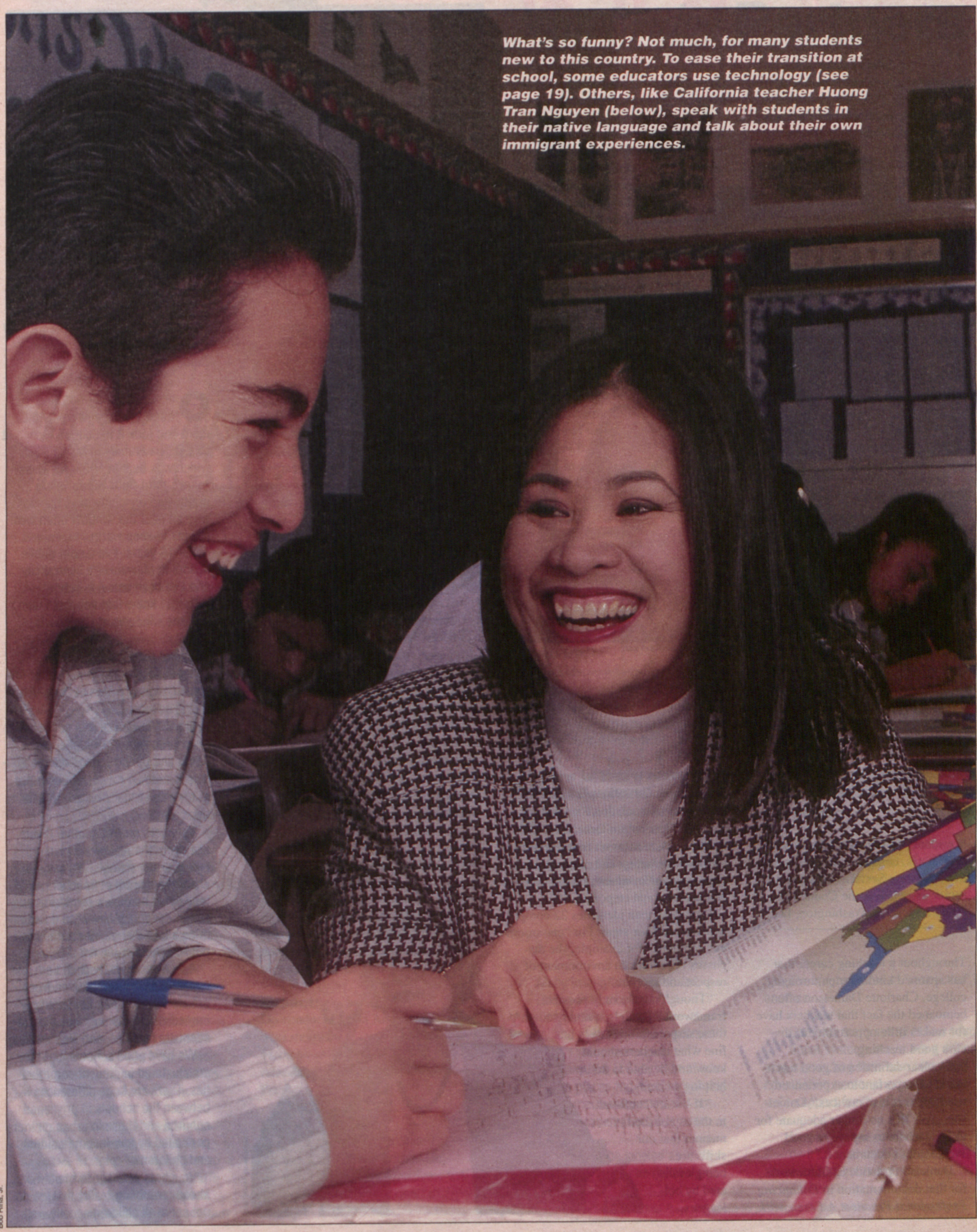


What's so funny? Not much, for many students new to this country. To ease their transition at school, some educators use technology (see page 19). Others, like California teacher Huong Tran Nguyen (below), speak with students in their native language and talk about their own immigrant experiences.

Bob Riha, Jr.

Innovators

Latest Talk in Math Class

Innovator: Linda Cooke

Job:
Seventh grade math teacher, Pullman Lincoln Middle School, Pullman, Washington

Bright Idea:
Linda Cooke's students better be ready to talk in math class.

Cooke teamed up with Verna Adams, a mathematics education professor from Washington State University, for a three-year research project that found math students learn more if they discuss and defend their solutions than if they listen passively to lectures.

Cooke now teaches math through "math talk"—student-centered discourse instead of teacher-centered lecturing.

"Youngsters work in cooperative groups," Cooke says. "They write up transparencies and explain to their classmates how to work the problem. The other students' job is to listen, ask questions, and disagree politely."

The real discourse occurs when students have to defend their thinking.

Cooke has observed that math talk builds confidence—and helps close the gender gap in math that emerges in middle school. "After math talk came in," she notes, "I've seen the girls' performance improve."

Jeff Green

Impact:
Cooke and Adams presented their study to the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics last year. NCTM released at the same time new standards that emphasize communication between students. Cooke is now incorporating her experiences into Washington State's prep program for teachers.

For More:
Contact Cooke at Pullman Lincoln Middle School, 509/334-3411.

The Definition of Good Teaching

Innovator: Charlotte Danielson

Job:
President of Princeton Education Associates, consultant to Educational Testing Service (ETS), and senior associate at the Council for Basic Education, Washington, D.C.

Bright Idea:
Throughout a teaching career that has spanned kindergarten through college, Charlotte Danielson often bemoaned the fact that teachers have (or make) little opportunity to discuss good teaching.

"A clear definition of good teaching is as important to experienced teachers as it is to novices," Danielson says. "It's no longer adequate for us as teachers to say we're good. We've got to document it."

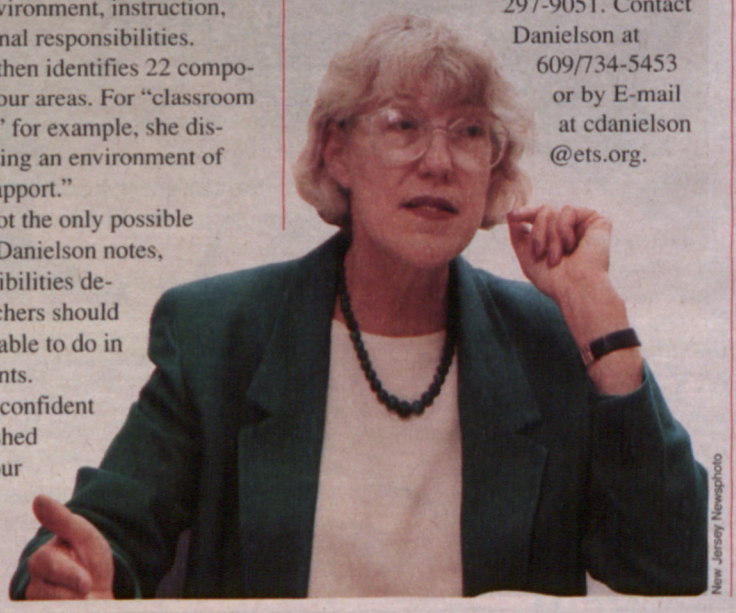
Danielson provides a framework for that documentation in *Enhancing Professional Practice: A Framework for Teaching* ($19.95), published this year by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

The book focuses on four teaching elements: planning and preparation, classroom environment, instruction, and professional responsibilities.

Danielson then identifies 22 components of the four areas. For "classroom environment," for example, she discusses "Creating an environment of respect and rapport."

"Though not the only possible framework," Danielson notes, these responsibilities define what teachers should know and be able to do in helping students.

"If we are confident in the established manner that our skills are being evaluated by colleagues, students, parents, and supervisors, everyone benefits," says Danielson.


New Jersey Newsphoto

Impact:
Danielson's book, which has sold more than 100,000 copies, is the basis for a new professional development workshop offered by ETS.

For more:
For workshop information, call 800/297-9051. Contact Danielson at 609/734-5453 or by E-mail at cdanielson@ets.org.

Real Face of Vouchers

"Teacher of the Year Gives Vouchers a Failing Grade" *by Bob Peterson,* The Progressive, *April 1997. Peterson is a fifth grade teacher in Milwaukee, an editor of* Rethinking Schools, *and a member of NEA's Emergency Commission on Urban Children.*

One recent winter morning, I found some caulk in my basement and took it to school. I teach at La Escuela Fratney in Milwaukee, which was built in 1903. My classroom's third-floor windows are drafty, and on windy days the kids who sit near the window often wear jackets to keep warm.

For 16 years, I've taught public school in Milwaukee's central city, and I've been active in school reform. I know that vouchers won't seal the windows at La Escuela Fratney.

One of the big myths of the school choice movement is that private schools are always better than public schools.

But in Milwaukee, the conservatives who clamor for higher standards and public school accountability promoted a private voucher program with virtually no accountability measures.

Vouchers are yet another diversion from the real problem in our failing urban schools. It's easy to chant the mantra of vouchers, as if they could magically transform education. It's much harder to do something about the real needs of urban public school students.

As a classroom teacher, I am less concerned with competition from private schools than I am with my immediate problems: class size, inadequate facilities, and staff training.

We have good schools, but they are clustered in affluent communities. There are huge differences between the schools in privileged suburbs and those in urban districts populated by low-income students and children of color.

Vouchers only aggravate the already troubling reality that we do not serve all children equally well.

Two Models from **Vietnam**

José Luis Villegas

Innovator: Hien Duc Do

Job:
Assistant professor in the social science department of San Jose State University focusing on Asian American studies, community studies, and race and ethnic relations

Bright Idea:
Many Americans don't realize the diversity of Vietnamese immigrants, notes Hien Duc Do, producer of the award-winning 1994 documentary *Vietnam at the Crossroads*. And that lack of awareness can affect the education of these immigrant children.

"The first wave of Vietnamese who came right after the Vietnam War, from 1976 through 1978, were mostly from the educated upper class," explains Do. "These immigrants excelled and became professionals in the United States."

And their children tended to arrive academically prepared and embrace school.

"The second wave of immigrants were boat people," Do continues. "They were more likely to come from poorer, rural areas—and they were less exposed to western culture."

This wave has not been as economically successful as the first, says Do. Many people have had to work one or two low-paying, difficult jobs that allow little time to spend with their children. And many don't see the justification for spending so many hard-earned dollars on a college education for their children.

Their children, in turn, may not place the same emphasis on academic achievement that their predecessors did.

And these students may cause problems in class out of sheer frustration. Many children spent time in refugee camps, during which time their education was halted. Yet upon arriving in the United States, they were placed in age-appropriate classes, where skill levels were way beyond their reach.

Their frustration is exacerbated, says Do, if they face educators who don't recognize their problems—and automatically hold them to a model minority standard that the "first wave" may have established.

"The best way to reach kids from this generation is to really pay attention to them—one on one," Do says. "We as educators have to reach out to these students and to their parents."

Impact:
Do conducts Asian American studies workshops for teachers. His book *Vietnamese in America* will be released this winter from Greenwood Press.

For More:
Contact Do at San Jose State University, Social Science Department, 1 Washington Square, San Jose, CA 95192-0107. Or send E-mail to do@sjsuvm1.sjsu.edu.

New Bridge **Partners**

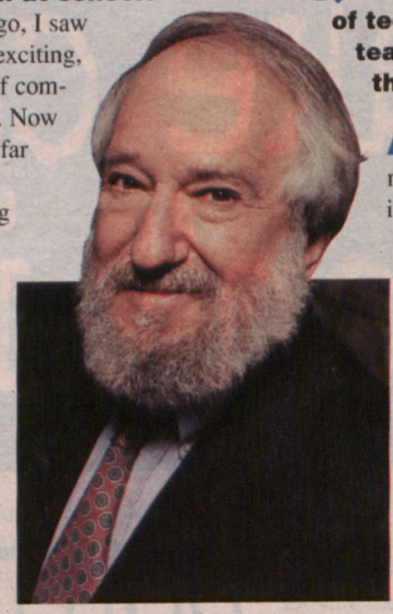
Seymour Papert, the Lego chair for Learning Research at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, is the inventor of the computer language Logo, designed to help children engineer their own learning. In The Connected Family: Bridging the Digital Generation Gap *(Longstreet $22.95), he explores the revolutionary effects computers are having on children.*

Q How does the way children use computers at home differ from the way they use them at school?

A Five years ago, I saw many more exciting, innovative uses of computers in schools. Now I'm running into far more interesting examples of using computers for learning in homes.

This trend offers a very significant resource for teachers.

We're beginning to see—and will see many more in the next few years—kids arriving in school who've had very good learning experiences with computers. They'll have acquired a lot of expertise outside of school.



Q How is that a resource for educators?

A One of the difficulties about making far-reaching changes in schools is the fact that teachers don't have the time to acquire new sets of skills and knowledge. This applies particularly to computers.

But if you have in your class even two or three kids who are really experts, that means that instead of there being only one of you, there are four.

In the classroom, the most important value is intellectual honesty. Computers give teachers greater ability to acknowledge what they don't know and to rely on children as a source of support and collaboration.

Q You say that schools are behind in their uses of technology. What can teachers do to close the gap?

A Teachers should recognize that they can make real decisions, even if the system tries to push them in other directions. And they should recognize that they've got allies—among kids, parents, and other teachers.

Teachers have also got to avoid going the easy way. The easiest thing is to have the school put in a computer and use it to look up information on the World Wide Web as if you were looking it up in a library. It's much harder to learn to really master the computer, to learn to program it—to use it as a basis for learning different ways of thinking about everything.

But I believe very many teachers are eager, willing, and have the energy to make change.

For more information on children and computing, visit Papert's Web site at www.ConnectedFamily.com.

Five Tips on **Multiculturalism**

1 Many immigrants new to the United States believe that American forms of discipline—at school and at home—are too lenient.

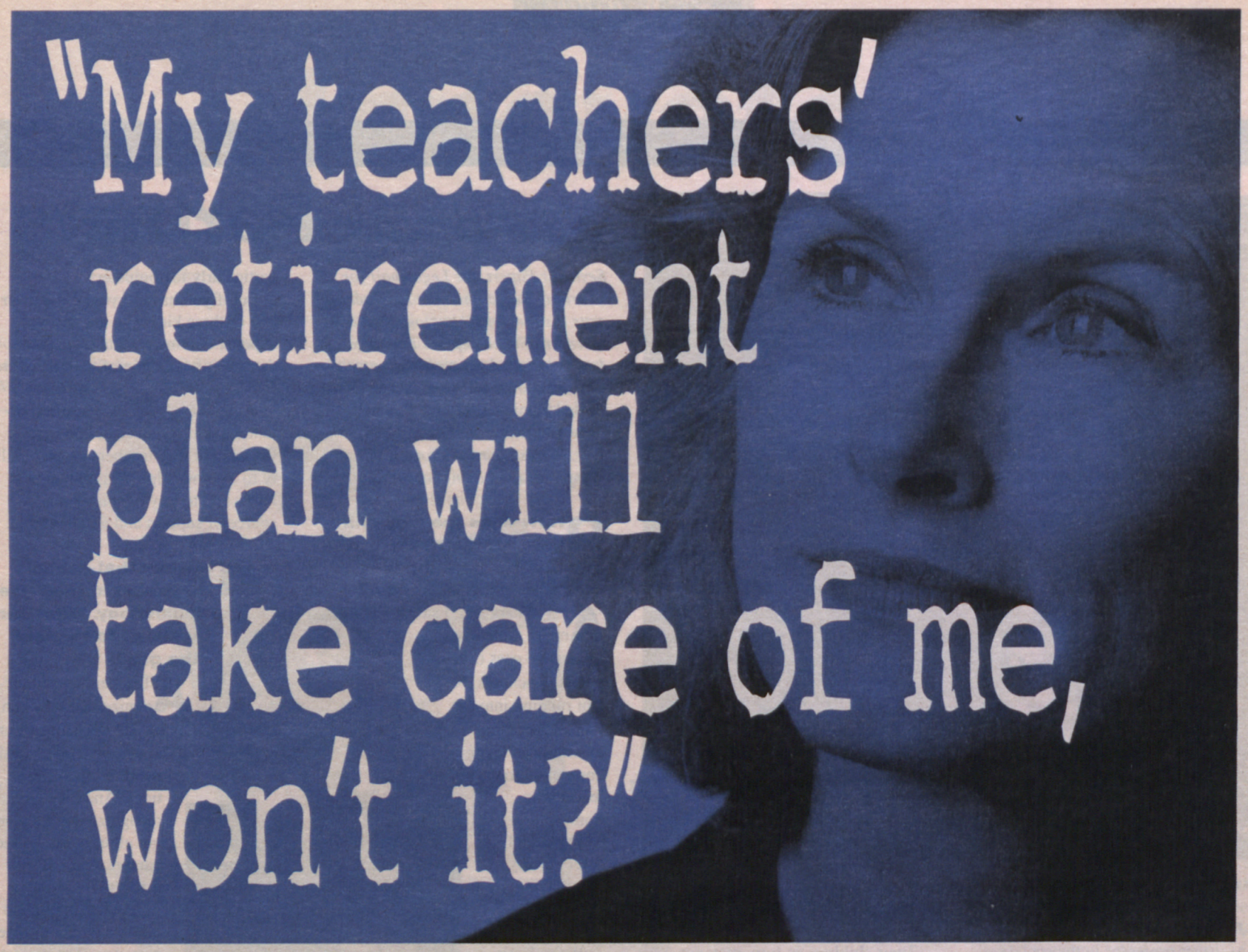
2 To many, the U.S. system of education places too much emphasis on extracurricular activities and not enough on academic achievement.

3 What might be labeled as "non-assertive" from one cultural perspective might be called "respectful" in another.

4 Students from authoritarian educational systems may have a difficult time expressing their own ideas and considering personal experience as valid support for their assertions.

5 In many other countries, a student's social development is not an educational concern.

Source: *Multicultural Manners: New Rules of Etiquette for a Changing Society.* Norine Dresser. Wiley, $14.95.



Don't count on it.

Fred Schwarz, NEA VIP

The fact is, you shouldn't depend on your State Teachers' Retirement System (STRS) as your only source of income during the many years you're likely to be retired. You'll need a reliable source of additional income, such as the NEA Valuebuilder Annuity, to help meet all your financial needs.

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Call today for your no-obligation consultation and we'll send you your FREE NEA Valuebuilder® Retirement Planning Kit.

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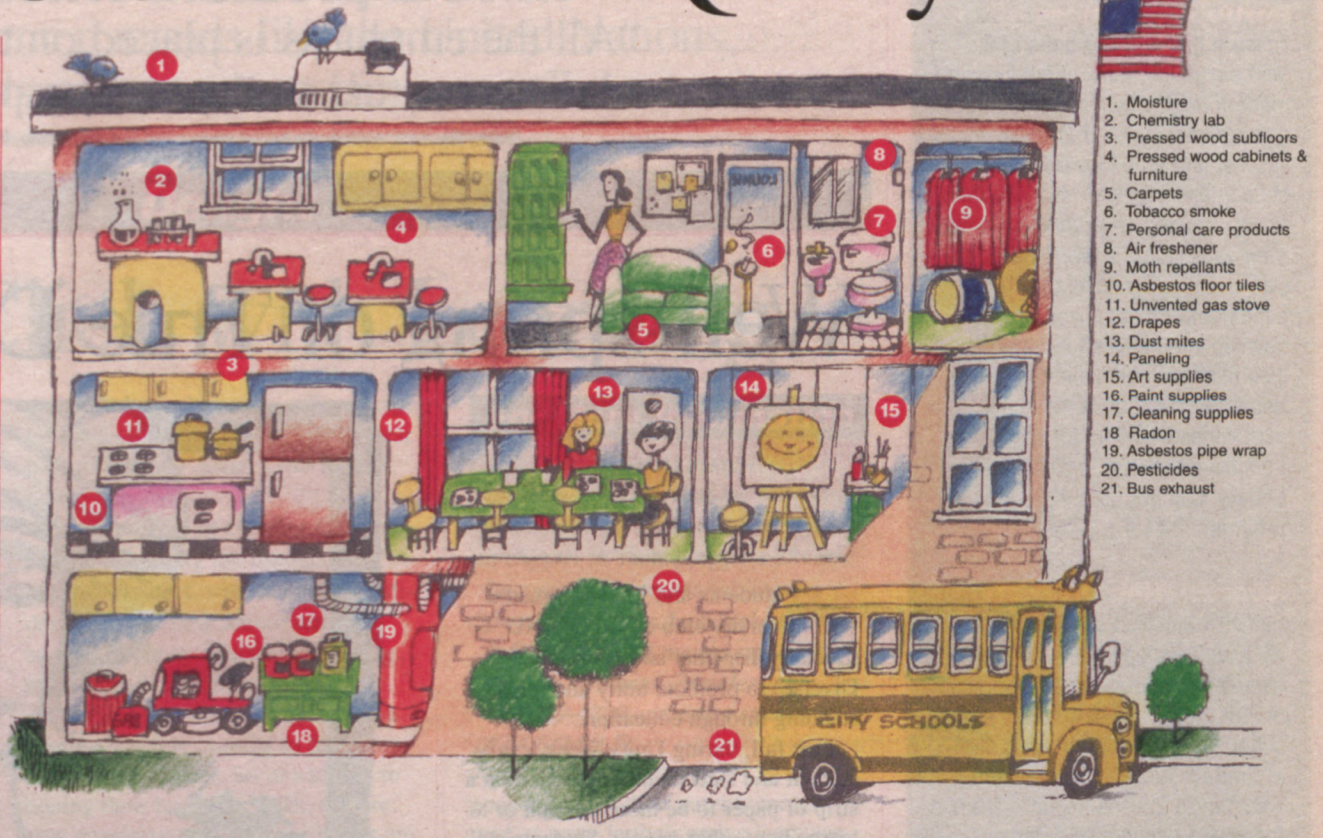
VBNT1097

Inside Scoop

The Stink Over Indoor Air Quality



Sources of air pollutants can be found throughout the average school building.

Definition, please.

Indoor air quality (IAQ) involves gauging how healthful—or not—the air is in a given room or building.

Air quality can be soured by pollutants that include pesticides, mold, pollen, art supplies, dust, radon, fungi, fibers, animal dander, and gases (see diagram).

Inadequate ventilation can increase indoor pollutant levels. Poorly ventilated buildings don't bring in enough outdoor air to dilute emissions from indoor sources or carry indoor air pollutants outside.

Various pollutants affect individuals differently. People may experience a variety of symptoms, different degrees of reaction, or no effects at all.

How hot?

When it comes to air quality in schools, the verdict is: don't breathe easy.

A 1995 report from the U.S. General Accounting Office shows that more than half of our schools have problems that affect indoor air quality.

Nearly one in five has at least one room with radon levels above the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recommended action level.

Radon, one key indoor air pollutant, is the second-leading cause of lung cancer in this country and the leading cause of lung cancer in non-smokers.

Tobacco smoke ("second-hand smoke"), another indoor air pollutant, causes 3,000 lung cancer deaths in nonsmokers in the United States each year—and exacerbates the asthma condition in up to 1 million children. Smoke may also contribute to up to 26,000 new childhood asthma cases.

How can I clear the air?

If you suspect an indoor air quality problem in your school, the EPA recommends obtaining its *IAQ Tools for Schools Action Kit* (see box for details), a guide that offers inexpensive methods to prevent and solve indoor air quality problems in schools.

Some examples include:

- Ensure that an adequate amount of outdoor air is being supplied and that outdoor air is not contaminated (for example, don't allow vehicles to idle near air intakes).
- Test for radon.
- Separate students and staff from construction and renovation areas.
- Reduce use of products that require ventilation during use.
- Reduce relative humidity indoors during hot and humid summers.

Why bother?

The figures on radon and second-hand smoke aren't enough? Then consider the fact that indoor air pollutants can reach levels that are five times—and sometimes even 1,000 times—higher than outdoor pollution levels. Given that most people spend 90 percent of their time indoors, indoor air pollution can pose a serious health risk.

Children are especially vulnerable to poor indoor air quality. Because they have higher respiration rates than adults, they inhale more air contaminants. Their respiratory systems are still developing, making them more susceptible to indoor air contaminants.

No wonder the EPA has stated that poor indoor air quality can affect student learning—and reduce the productivity of educators.

Any downside?

The majority of indoor air quality problems can be prevented or solved through low-cost solutions. But some problems—replacing a leaking roof or a deteriorating ventilation system—may require more costly repairs.

"Many school districts do not want to accept responsibility for indoor air quality issues because of the costs for remediation," says Frank Czapla, a Pennsylvania teacher who's been trained by NEA's Health Information Network on these issues.

In some situations, limited maintenance budgets may prevent school districts from making needed repairs.

Who's throwing stones?

Critics maintain that the symptoms of poor indoor air quality are psychosomatic, a position sometimes reinforced by a lack of consensus in the medical profession on the breadth of the health problems caused by poor air quality.

Other critics question the credibility of the studies conducted to determine the actual health threat of indoor pollutants, especially radon.

But there's ample evidence about the health effects of some major classes of indoor air pollutants, including radon, tobacco smoke, and carbon monoxide. And scientists are still studying the effects of hundreds of others.

Where's NEA on this?

NEA's Health Information Network is working to educate NEA members on the importance of indoor air quality issues. To date, HIN has formally trained 51 NEA members through its IAQ in Schools Program.

For more information on participating in this program, call the HIN Hotline at 800/718-8387.

—Christine Luong
NEA Health Information Network

Need More Information?

- For a free copy of *IAQ and You*, an information packet from the NEA Health Information Network, call the NEA HIN Hotline at 800/718-8387.
- *IAQ Tools for Schools Action Kit* ($22) is available from the U.S. Government Printing Office. Call 202/512-1800 or visit the Web at www.envirovillage.com/tools/.
- *Indoor Air Quality Basics for Schools* and *The Inside Story: A Guide to Indoor Air Quality* are free from the IAQ Information Clearinghouse. Call 800/438-4318 or E-mail iaqinfo@aol.com.
- Ken Cisneros, a science teacher at Cohasset High School in Massachusetts, has initiated a "Healthy School Environment" project, an award-winning interdisciplinary project about keeping schools healthy. This past year, the seventh grade team assessed the indoor air quality in the school library, then wrote a letter to the principal detailing their findings and recommendations for action. Lesson plans, resources, and other information can be found on the Web at www.idis.com/teachweb/cohasset/tblcnthe.htm.

Students &

Good Stuff

Portfolio Practices
To learn the nuts and bolts of student portfolios, think about assessment in fresh ways, and find strategies for keeping your innovative assessment practices from being stifled, take a look at *Portfolio Practices: Thinking Through the Assessment of Children's Work*. Based on classroom experience, this 160-page book will show you how to develop alternatives to traditional examinations and avoid the pitfalls that other colleagues may have experienced. $14.95 for NEA members from the NEA Professional Library. Call 800/229-4200 and order stock #1858-3-00-F.

Appreciating Diversity
See how teachers around the country have developed new ways of deepening their students' appreciation of the variety of cultures in their school, in their communities, and around the world in *Appreciating Diversity*, a 22-minute video from the award-winning NEA series *Teacher TV*. $15.95 for NEA members from the NEA Professional Library. Call 800/229-4200 and order stock #7761-X-00-F.

A Flying Start
Students in K-4 classes can join "Off to a Flying Start," a NASA Langley Learning Technologies Project on the Web that teaches students how and why planes fly. Students then "build" a plane from instructions and templates provided, collect flight data, and compete to build their own plane. The project runs from October 31 until May 1. For more information and online registration, visit the site at k12unix.larc.nasa.gov/flyingstart.

Gathering of Knowledge
In J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit*, Rivendell is a place where diverse individuals gather, both to seek information and to learn from each other. At the Rivendell Educational Archive (at www.watson.org/rivendell/), educators can browse through categories that include several core-curriculum subjects: botany, drama, environmental science, history, literature, mathematics, philosophy, religion, and visual arts. Resources available include articles, bibliographies, reading lists, historical overviews, biographies, and graphical and textual exhibits.

You know you have a problem when . . .

"All the emphasis is placed on test scores and not on actual student accomplishments."

Kathy Naeseth, sixth grade social studies teacher, Pasadena, Maryland

Dilemma

Well-spring of True Diversity

How do you make multiculturalism more than just 'tacos on Tuesday'?

Ted Pitts

My students and I have formed a diversity club called STAND (Socially Together and Naturally Diverse) to promote unity and understanding through education.

Last fall, during Unity Week, every student and staff member pledged on a strip of paper to be more tolerant or to learn about other people. Students stapled these strips into a colorful 700-foot chain.

In the spring, during Diversity Week, we revisited this activity by having students write about how they had kept their pledges. Then they folded these papers into origami cranes, showed them off at a rally, and mailed them to the Peace Memorial Museum in Hiroshima.

Our community connected with the world, and our students felt the power of their pledge.

This year, a new section of the school newspaper will run articles on cultural issues, including language, religion, holidays, and the arts. Our rallies will focus not on a culture, but on a theme—the celebrations rally, for one, might include Hanukkah, Christmas, Kwanzaa, and Asian New Year.

I believe that the key to effective diversity education depends on integrating ideas and lessons into the whole school—its activities and classrooms—to bring students together.

Kathleen Gonzalez
High school English teacher
San Jose, California

I display posters and role models that will enhance appreciation of all contributions from many cultures. I also research and supplement the curriculum regularly with information from other cultures. This helps to foster a universal choir with a harmonious rhythm including those solo voices so often not heard.

"I, too, sing America," is the first line of a poem by Langston Hughes. I am a singer, and I love to hear all the voices in my classroom. They cry out for acknowledgment and inclusion.

Darlene Cooper
Middle school science teacher
Wichita, Kansas

A few years ago, I started a Multicultural Club at my junior high school. Some 100 students—many from other countries, including Mexico and different parts of Asia—joined to share and understand the cultures of their peers.

We went on field trips and took food baskets to the retirement home. But one of the most popular events was a dinner where each parent and child brought a cultural dish to share.

Advancing multiculturalism also means getting minority students involved in academic areas where they've been underrepresented.

To that end, I started the MESA—Minority Engineering and Science Association—program at my school in 1992. Its purpose is to select minority groups that have been underrepresented in the sciences and place them on a concentrated, accelerated math track.

Multiculturalism also involves providing students—especially those historically and culturally underserved—with adult ethnic role models at school. This gives them an impetus to succeed in their own education.

Robert Ito
Junior high school educator
Clinton, Utah

Got an Answer?

How do you balance competition and cooperation in the classroom?
Send your answer to *NEA Today* by regular mail, Fax 202/822-7206, or E-mail at **dilemma2@neatoday.org**. Include your name, educational position, and phone numbers.

Strategies

You know you've been successful when . . .

"Your media center sounds like the United Nations, and kids rush to get media passes."

Michelle Alexander, high school media specialist, Germantown, Maryland

Delight

Students Click with Learning

Immigrant students ease into a new language and culture with the help of computers.

At Phantom Lake Elementary in Bellevue, Washington, Jeff Tomasik's students break into small groups at computer stations as they focus on their latest assignments. They group themselves based on what language they speak most comfortably.

Located in the rapidly diversifying community 10 miles east of Seattle, Phantom Lake is home to students who speak more than 20 languages, including Spanish, Russian, Vietnamese, Mandarin Chinese, Romanian, Lao, and Hungarian.

These students attend—and largely struggle through—regular classes. But the first through fifth graders come to Tomasik's class at the school's Newcomers Center for 90 minutes each day of intensive English-as-a-Second-Language instruction.

There Tomasik is stocked with 10 word-processing laptops, ready with the day's lessons. Students can tote their laptop between the Newcomer class, regular classes, and home.

Limited English skills don't hold these students back from mastering technology. Some have created a bilingual electronic dictionary. Others have developed a multimedia, online recipe exchange that features images of their parents cooking dishes from their native countries.

In the process of creating these projects and learning the mechanics of using computers, students build confidence in their new school setting—and get in plenty of time developing their English language skills.

Many of the students never used a computer before coming to the Newcomers Center. So in addition to honing their language skills, they're now acquiring computer skills that are increasingly in demand in American society.

At the Newcomers Center, Tomasik doesn't focus solely on his own assignments. Work begun in other classes can be brought to the center, where native-speaking peers can help a student work through a task.

Most students attend the center for six to eight months, some for a year, before moving full-time into regular classes.

The greatest challenge, says Tomasik, is teaching English to students who aren't literate in their first language—a problem that's often compounded when their parents cannot read or write in their native language as well.

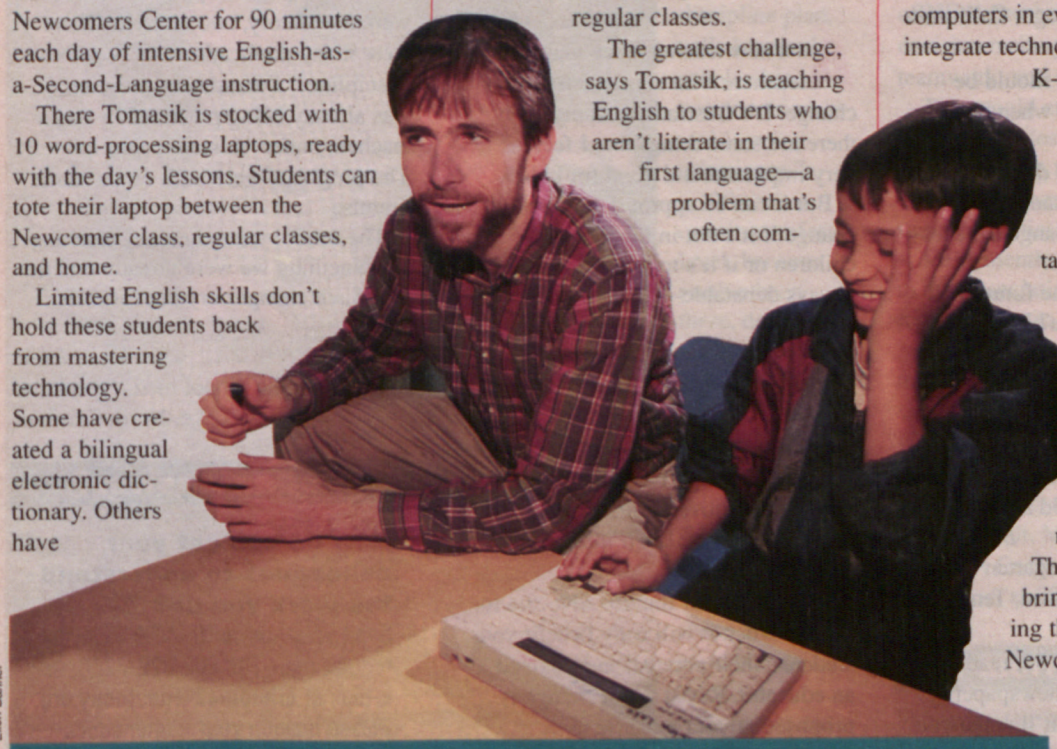
"Newcomers are going to struggle for a while," Tomasik says. "But they're incredibly resilient. They're willing day in and day out to put themselves on the line. They don't seem to be fazed by anything."

Tomasik himself has persevered to create the environment that his students currently enjoy. In 1993, the school district passed a levy to put computers in every classroom and to integrate technology throughout the K-12 curriculum—a levy that did not extend to ESL classes.

Concerned that his students didn't have the English skills to take full advantage of the computers in regular classrooms, Tomasik and his principal, Sylvia Hayden, won a grant from NEA's National Foundation for the Improvement of Education. They used their money to bring technology—including the laptops—to the Newcomers Center.

And that's helped to open a new world for Tomasik's ESL students.

—Bonnie Gardner



Ellen Banner

Computers have helped Washington state teacher Jeff Tomasik develop a "real safe, comfortable place" for his English-as-a-Second-Language students to learn as they adjust to their new country.

For More Information

Jeff Tomasik writes extensively about his students and the Newcomers Center in "Welcome Los Niños," a chapter in Technology for Diverse Learners. *This recent publication from the NEA Professional Library is $9.95 for NEA members, $12.95 for non-members. To order, call 800/229-4200 and order stock #2908-9-00-F.*

Idea Exchange

For the New Kid in Town

At the beginning of the year, I start a New Students' Folder. In it, I include everything I made or need for a student who joins us after the year has started, including name tags, sharing cards, and letters that I send home to the parents.

On the outside of the folder, I list what's inside and other materials I need to get for the student, such as books and forms.

This way, when a new student appears at the door, I don't have to run around to find all the needed materials when the bell rings.

Pat Allen
Oxnard, California

Taking a Powder

When removing posters or other paper items that I've attached to the wall using two-sided tape, I have a hard time pulling the tape off the back of the poster without tearing it. So now I go over the sticky tape with a chalkboard eraser that is particularly dusty. The chalk dust neutralizes the sticky surface, and I can store the item without worry.

John Hendricks
Onalaska, Wisconsin

Flat Farley

In my eighth grade science class, I give each student a picture of Flat Farley, a character who loves to travel and was run over by a four-wheel drive (hence his name!). The class writes a funny bio for Farley, then sends his picture and bio to friends and family around the world.

The students ask the the recipients to take a picture of Farley with plants or animals typical of their region and mail the picture back. We post all the pictures, plot where Farley's been, and calculate the distance traveled.

Jeff Perry
Kent County, Maryland

Want More?

These tips are all from NEA's new E-mail service, Works4Me. It's weekly, and it's free! To sign up, just send an E-mail to lyris@list.nea.org.

- In the "subject" line, type: sign me up, NEA!
- In the message block, type: subscribe Works4Me
- Send the message.

To submit your own tip, E-mail it to: owner-Works4Me@list.nea.org.

Professional

Good Stuff

Preview on Peer Review

"I really expected that it was going to be like *Lean on Me* or *Dead Poets' Society*," says Jennifer Reidel, thinking back to her first day in the classroom.

"It was the complete opposite," recalls Reidel. Yelling at each other, challenging her, and constantly moving from their seats, her eighth grade students at Johnson Park Middle School in Columbus, Ohio, "pushed me to the outer limits, to the point where I was in tears," says Reidel.

Reidel's classroom was out of control, and her principal wanted to remove her.

To the rescue came the district's peer assistance and review (PAR) program, an innovative collaboration that partners outstanding teachers with the administration to help teachers in trouble.

NEA member Pat Stedman worked with Reidel daily, observing and advising the new teacher on how to regain control of her class and become a more effective teacher. Stedman also worked with administrators and other peer reviewers to assess Reidel's progress.

And in the end, a quality teacher was born, a teacher with a structured classroom whose students know she cares.

Want to know what advice Stedman gave Reidel? Confused over the controversies surrounding peer review? Then tune in to ***School Stories*** on Sunday, October 19, 9 a.m. ET on The Learning Channel.

You'll get the answers—and find that in Columbus, which has the longest running peer review program around, PAR counselors do more than support new teachers. They also:

- cajole veteran teachers who need to improve
- handle hard questions from administrators and Association leaders
- support one another in what's often a very tough job.

If you want to read all about it, next month's ***NEA Today*** will feature a cover story on the Columbus peer review program.

In that issue, NEA members will also tackle the issue of peer review on the Debate page. And on the Rights Watch page, *NEA Today* will provide the legal picture of issues surrounding peer review.

You know you have a problem when . . .

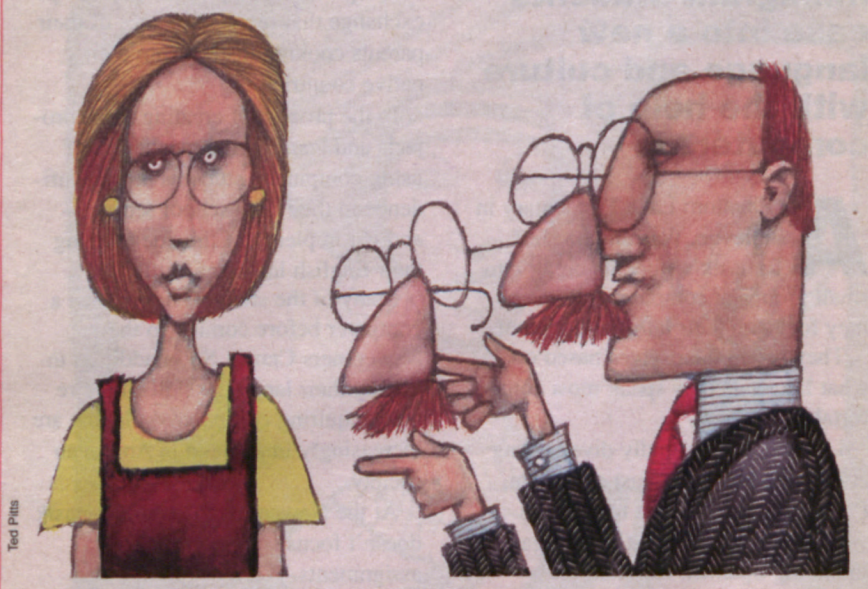
"You can't reach a student no matter what you do. When that happens, I bounce ideas off other NEA members. It helps."

Ray Barrios, high school English teacher, Cut Off, Louisiana

Dilemma

Come On, Try It–You'll Like It

Or maybe you won't. Professionally, when is it appropriate to resist change?



Ted Pitts

When it is being pushed down our throats, and there is no research to prove that it works. When we have had no involvement in trying to find solutions to our problems. And when we're not sure there is a problem.

In my district, at the request of the board of education, our Association worked with administrators and parent groups to come up with a textbook selection process. After hundreds of hours of work, the board disregarded our recommendations and came up with its own.

This approach to change—with no respect for the contributions of those who must execute the changes—should be resisted.

Bill Crane
High school counselor
San Diego, California

I don't feel that change should be totally resisted except when it's physically harmful.

I know change can be difficult and may even create unpleasant feelings in the workplace. But if change is necessary and good—why not?

The big question of the future will be: How flexible are you? Everything is changing, including the school system. The blackboard may be in the same position, but in-house, day-to-day activities will continue to change. The days of being comfortably caught up in our own little world are all gone.

Bill Walker
Kindergarten teacher
Jackson, Tennessee

When you approach 50, read *The 50 Year Dash* by newspaper columnist Bob Greene. It'll make you feel good about being middle class, middle aged, and resistant to change.

I've worked in this field for more than 20 years, and I've seen changes come and go. The fact is, change can be for better or worse. When it's for the worse, it's appropriate to resist.

Terrill Hart
Speech, language, pathology specialist
Oceanside, California

As a new teacher, I see many teachers who consistently resist change. It's frustrating. At my school, there are some things that I feel are very important and good for kids.

But it can be appropriate to resist change if it's not in the interest of children or if it's too radical. That's always debatable—a tough one!

Patty Ladegaard
Third grade teacher
Campbell, California

Change for "the sake of change" is good enough reason to resist it. Change for proven effectiveness and accountability makes it meaningful and essential.

A good rule of thumb: advocate for change when it will truly benefit your students, their parents, and yourself as an educator. Resist when change is proposed at your expense as a guardian of quality public education.

Harry Kuhn
Elementary social worker
Rahway, New Jersey

I wouldn't decide against change before I examined it. But I'll resist it if I know it's a waste of time and resources.

Recently, our county took on seven staff developmental programs. Five were mandatory, two elective. There were many duplications. "Cooperative Discipline," a mandatory program, was already being practiced by many teachers under "Assertive Discipline." The programs were built on the same premise.

The school wasted money teaching us something we were already practicing. Such changes cry out for resistance.

Wadie Ryan
Middle school media specialist
Spring Lake, North Carolina

Got an Answer?

How do you get your colleagues to understand the work you do?

Send your answer to *NEA Today* by regular mail, Fax 202/822-7206, or E-mail at **dilemma2@neatoday.org**. Please include your name, educational position, mailing address, and phone numbers.

All published respondents will receive a nifty *NEA Today* mug.

Growth

You know you've been successful when . . .

"Your peers ask for your opinion, both on teaching matters and on Association business."

Judy Barnes, high school English teacher, Tallahassee, Florida

Delight

Strength on the Training Circuit

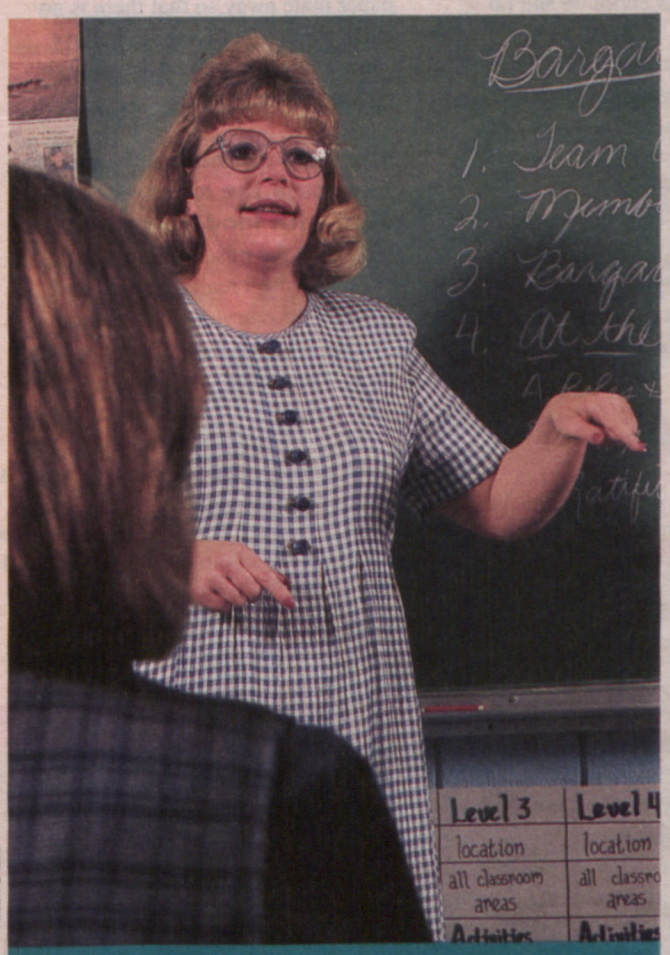
NEA members take the lead in advancing the professional development of their co-workers throughout Michigan.

You'll find them in schools, cafeterias, bus barns, and at Association meetings throughout Michigan. They'll be talking to crowds about assertiveness, team building, or problem solving.

Meet the MEA Cadre, a crew of 11 highly trained members of the Michigan Education Association who fan out across the state to offer all Association members workshops on issues related to professional development.

The cadre's strength lies in the fact that "it does a lot to help members believe in the need for, and take ownership of, their own professional growth," says MEA staffer Joy Stack, who coordinates most of the workshops.

MEA carefully matches instructors to their audience, usually sends them out in pairs, and gives them extensive training. They're schooled in course content, adult learning styles, facilitation skills, and presentation styles—even how to dress for class.



Robert Chase

When it comes to conflict management or improving communication, paraprofessional Marcy Hartung goes to the head of the class, training other Michigan NEA members on professional development issues.

Marcy Hartung, who recently traveled to Evart, Michigan, to help playground aides devise a discipline plan, calls her road scholarship "empowering, a real learning experience."

"There's a certain comfort level, because you've been there, done that, and walked a mile in their shoes," stresses Hartung, a member of the Jackson County Education Association whose workshops are reputed to be top-notch.

"It comes easier when it comes from one of your peers," says Hartung.

"In the course of conversation, it also comes out that I'm not a certified teacher," adds Hartung, a teaching assistant for the emotionally impaired in the Jackson Intermediate School District. "A lot of times, there's real surprise over this fact. It's a good feeling!"

Hartung and three other support staffers on the MEA Cadre—head custodian Tim Smith, paraprofessional Dan Haske, and bus driver Sam Van Vuuren—have been surprising colleagues in training since 1994. That was the year MEA formed the ESP Cadre to train support staff at the local level and statewide conferences.

In 1994, MEA expanded its training cadre to include all its members. Training veterans, both support staff and teachers, joined to form the current MEA Cadre. Together they cover topics that include stress management and appreciating diversity.

The MEA Cadre's ultimate goal, says Stack, is to increase the number of NEA members who are skilled in decision making, problem solving, teamwork, and content areas.

This would enable them to "assume leadership roles at all levels," says Stack, "and, in turn, serve as role models and mentors to develop the same capacities in others."

MEA members seem to have taken to the Association's models on the training circuit.

Each year, more support staff register at MEA's Instruction and Professional Development Conference, which five years ago was attended primarily by teachers. And teachers have given the program good reviews.

As a result, MEA intends to expand the MEA Cadre from the current 11 instructors to 29 by late fall.

For More Information

Contact Joy Stack at the Michigan Education Association, 517/336-4030, for information on MEA's professional development program and the MEA Cadre.

Idea Exchange

I challenged the teachers at my school, H.O. Brittingham Elementary, to earn Level I certification from the Computer Learning Foundation. I suggested that every teacher stay one day after school to try new computer programs.

Teachers kept a record of the programs they tried, and I posted a chart in the hall to keep them motivated. The teachers weren't alone—eight third and fourth graders who were previously trained helped train them.

The teachers learned how to use new software programs. The students felt good about themselves in their new role. And the school now has its Level I certificate.

Martha Eisenhour
Computer technician
Cape Henlopen, Delaware

To promote paraprofessionalism, here's what we're doing in Wisconsin's West Bend schools:

- Several years ago, the paraprofessional and clerical units negotiated a professional growth section to their contracts. It provides $1,500 per unit to attend in-services, workshops, etc. The class that's taken has to pertain to their job responsibilities.
- West Bend has also developed a professional staff development program that provides in-service opportunities for aide and clerical employees on early release days (approximately once a month), when the teachers are involved in professional advancement.
- West Bend aide and clerical units have also become involved with the Professional Development Academy, University of Wisconsin system, which provides a certificated program for support personnel.

Marolyn Kell
Secretary
West Bend, Wisconsin

ShareYour Ideas

You can pass along your classroom tips to *NEA Today*'s over 2.2 million readers in one of four ways:

- By mail: *NEA Today*, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036
- By phone: 202/822/7201
- By fax: 202/822-7206
- By E-mail: Ideas@neatoday.nea.org

Health

From the Network

The NEA Health Information Network suggests the following helpful resources.

Breast Cancer
October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month. For more information on breast cancer and early detection, contact your local American Cancer Society or call 800/ACS-2345. For a list of materials and resources for planning local early detection activities, contact the NEA Health Information Network's resource line at 800/718-8387.

Talking about Sexuality
October is also National Family Sexuality Education Month, coordinated by the Planned Parenthood Federation of America. Call 800/230-PLAN for more information or visit on the Web at www.ppfa.org/ppfa/index.html. For information on talking to your kids about HIV/AIDS, call the CDC National AIDS Clearinghouse at 800/342-AIDS or visit on the Web at www.cdc.gov/nchstp/dstd/dstdp.html.

Women's Health
Get Real: Straight Talk About Women's Health, an award-winning health education project targeting women ages 18-24, provides a 27-minute video with discussion guide, posters, detailed fact sheets, and instructions on how to coordinate and execute a health promotion program. For ordering information, contact the Society for the Advancement of Women's Health Research, 1920 L St., N.W., Suite 510, Washington, DC 20036 or visit the Web at www.womens-health.org.

Talking about Alcohol
"Ready or Not": Talking to Kids About Alcohol, a community program designed for parents and other adult supervisors of kids ages 10-14, centers around an engaging 20-minute video on five steps to prevent underage drinking problems. Viewer/participant brochures are included. The *"Ready or Not"* video is available as a free loan from many Blockbuster Video stores nationwide. Kits for facilitating group activities are available from the Century Council at 800/624-9575.

Allergies–Nothing to Sneeze At

When it comes to food allergies, even peanut butter can harbor deadly dangers for some children.

Anne Muñoz-Furlong founded The Food Allergy Network in 1991 to provide education, emotional support, and coping strategies to individuals with food allergies. She recently spoke with Christine Luong, a staff member from the NEA Health Information Network.

What are the most common food allergies for children?
Milk, eggs, wheat, peanuts, treenuts, and soy are the most common allergens. Most children will outgrow their food allergies—with the exception of those to peanuts and treenuts, which are considered life long.

The most common food allergens for adults are peanut, treenut, fish, and shellfish.

What causes food allergies?
In a person with a food allergy, the immune system incorrectly thinks that a food is a harmful invader and creates antibodies in response. When the person eats that food again, the antibodies release histamine, which causes the reaction.

So in a sense, a food allergy is the immune system being overprotective.

What are the signs that a child is having an allergic reaction?
The symptoms vary from child to child. They can include: difficulty breathing, swelling of the mouth and throat, hives, vomiting, abdominal cramps, and diarrhea.

If the symptoms continue and no medical attention is given, a child could go into an anaphylactic reaction, which is also called general shock. He could have a drop in blood pressure, which could lead to unconsciousness and could cause death.

The symptoms typically occur a few minutes after a child has eaten the food, so he knows immediately that something is wrong—sometimes as soon as he puts something in his mouth.

Are any food allergies life-threatening?
The foods that have been implicated the most in fatal reactions include peanuts, treenuts, eggs, and milk.

But any food can cause a reaction. It's how allergic you are that determine the threat.

What precautions should school employees observe regarding allergies?
The biggest risk that school employees should know about is cross-contamination.

For example, if you make a peanut butter and jelly sandwich on a cutting board and simply wipe the board clean instead of washing it with hot, soapy water, there may be enough residual—invisible peanut protein—to contaminate whatever food you put on next. And that residual may cause a reaction for someone.

In one case, a teenage girl with a peanut allergy found a butter knife that looked clean on her kitchen counter and used it to butter some toast. In 45 minutes, she was dead from an anaphylactic reaction. Her parents later found out that her brother had used that knife to make a peanut butter sandwich, wiped the knife clean, and left it on the counter.

If food service staff are making a peanut butter sandwich, they can make it on a paper plate, and then throw the paper plate away so that there is no chance that other food might have some contact in that area and might pick up some protein.

What else should schools do to ensure the safety of children with food allergies?
Eliminate the misconception that food allergies aren't really serious, and ensure that everyone in the school is aware of what a food allergy is, what foods cause allergies, what the symptoms are, how to prevent an allergic reaction. And equally important, have an emergency plan in place for what to do if a reaction occurs.

How quickly you react has an impact on whether a child, in some cases, will live or die. With education and teamwork, it's a very easy disease to manage. It's awareness that keeps you safe.

Resources

■ The Food Allergy Network (FAN) is the only non-profit organization in the United States that is dedicated solely to dealing with food allergies. The Network offers several low-cost publications, including booklets, an award-winning animated video for children, several videos for adults and school staff, a cookbook, and "How To Read A Label" cards. In addition, members receive a bimonthly newsletter and special alert mailings. For more information, to purchase a one-year $24 membership, or for assistance in a special situation, contact the Food Allergy Network, 10400 Eaton Pl., Suite 107, Fairfax, VA 22031. Call 800/929-4040, fax 703/691-2713, or visit the Web at www.foodallergy.org/.

■ *Understanding Food Allergy*, a new 16-page booklet from the American Academy of Allergy and Immunology and the International Food Information Council Foundation, explains the basic symptoms, diagnosis, and management of food allergies and how the condition differs from other intolerances to food. A free copy can be ordered by sending a self-addressed, stamped, business-sized envelope to Understanding Food Allergy, P.O. Box 1144, Rockville, MD 20850.

Rights Watch

Gay Student Battles Bashers

And a court rules that schools must stop the harassment of gay students—or risk being sued for big bucks.

At first, his middle school classmates called him the usual names: "queer," "faggot," "homo."

Then they got physical—they spit on him, tripped him, and pushed him down.

Then they got violent—two students held him down and enacted a mock rape as 20 other students in the science classroom looked on and laughed.

And what was the school's response when Jamie Nabozny repeatedly complained to the principal of Ashland (Wisconsin) Middle School?

Astonishingly, she said "boys will be boys" and told him that if he was "going to be so openly gay," he should "expect" such behavior from his fellow students.

The abuse got worse when Nabozny moved on to Ashland High School.

There students pushed his head into a urinal in the boys' room and urinated on him. They later assaulted him in a school hallway, kicking him in the stomach so many times that he needed surgery.

And what was the high school assistant principal's response?

According to court papers, he "laughed" and told Nabozny that he "deserved such treatment because he is gay."

Scared and depressed, Jamie Nabozny attempted suicide. Three times. He later dropped out of school, moved to Minneapolis, and received counseling.

Then he hired a lawyer. And he sued the school district and the administrators who had ignored his pleas for help.

Last November, after a jury decided that three Ashland School District officials had discriminated against Nabozny because he is gay, the school district agreed to pay more than $900,000 in damages.

"This settlement sends a message—with many zeroes at the end of it—to school officials about what can happen if they don't take steps to prevent and put an end to anti-gay harassment," warns Jon Davidson, an attorney with the Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund.

Ken Cole, executive director of the Wisconsin Association of School Boards, says, "This could have serious long-term implications. This is an area of liability where there are no caps."

Adds Lambda attorney Patricia Logue, "Countless gay kids have paid a high price for abuse. Now the tables have turned, and it is prejudice that is costly."

Nabozny's million-dollar recovery generated a lot of media attention. But the real news is the decision handed down by the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals in July 1996, prior to the jury trial and settlement last fall.

The Seventh Circuit in *Nabozny v. Podlesny* became the first court in the country to hold that school officials can be held liable for failing to stop the harassment of gay students.

The court agreed with Nabozny that the school's refusal to act—despite his repeated complaints of verbal and physical abuse—violated his constitutional right to equal protection under the law in two different ways.

First, the court said Nabozny's complaints were largely ignored because he was a male complaining about sexual harassment, rather than a female.

Noting the principal's alleged response that "boys will be boys," the court said: "We find it impossible to believe that a female lodging a similar complaint would have received the same response."

Second—and more importantly—the court held that the school failed to protect Nabozny because he was gay and that such discrimination violates the U.S. Constitution.

The court said, "We are unable to garner any rational basis for permitting one student to assault another based on the victim's sexual orientation."

The importance of the Nabozny case cannot be overstated: school officials now are constitutionally required to stop the harassment of gay students, and if they refuse or fail to do so, they can be sued in federal court for substantial money damages.

The case holds significance for another reason: it can be used to challenge discrimination against gay school employees.

—Michael D. Simpson
NEA Office of General Counsel

St. Paul Pioneer Press

After enduring years of torment from other students for being gay, Jamie Nabozny successfully sued school administrators for ignoring his pleas for help.

Update

Stop Student Sexual Harassment Now—a question-and-answer pamphlet that provides NEA members with practical advice on how to recognize student sexual harassment, what to do to stop it, and how to prevent it from occurring—is available from NEA Human and Civil Rights. For a free copy of this pamphlet, call 202/822-7700 or visit NEA's Web site at www.nea.org.

Resources

Violence against gay people isn't limited to the few individuals whose cases go to court. The National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs documented more than 2,500 incidences of anti-gay violence last year—and those are only the reported incidents.

According to the coalition, anti-gay hate crimes surge in response to anti-gay rhetoric. In 1996, those crimes accompanied the controversy over the possible legalization of same-sex marriages.

Local issues can also trigger anti-gay behavior. These may include applications for gay clubs at schools, school board prohibitions on discussing sexual orientation, and censorship of library books with gay/lesbian issues.

NEA conducts awareness workshops on issues of concern to gay and lesbian employees and students, including education, stereotyping, counseling, and school policies. The next two workshops are scheduled for October 24-26 (in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina) and November 14-16 (at a California location to be announced).

For more information—and to obtain a copy of the action sheet "Understanding Gay and Lesbian Students Through Diversity"—contact NEA Human and Civil Rights, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036, call 202/822-7700, or E-mail mfaber@nea.org.

Other organizations to contact:

- **Person Project** (Public Education Regarding Sexual Orientation Nationally) works to improve the treatment of gay/lesbian students in K-12 schools. 586 62nd St., Oakland, CA 94609-1246. Fax 510/601-8883. On the Web: www.youth.org/loco/PERSONProject/.
- **Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Teachers Network** (GLSTN) promotes the creation of school environments in which all are valued and respected, regardless of sexual orientation. 122 West 26th St., Suite 1100, New York, NY 10001. 212/727-0135. On the Web: www.glstn.org/freedom/.
- **Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays** (PFLAG) promotes the health and well-being of gays and lesbians and their families and friends. 1101 14th St., N.W., Suite 1030, Washington, DC 20005. 202/638-4200. On the Web: www.pflag.org/.

Bits & Bytes

Bytes for Beginners

Our school has begun to put together a new technology plan. Can you offer us any insight or resource on how we should proceed?

First, survey the staff to find out two things: their interest in using technology in their classroom, and the technology skills they already possess. It's also good to ask what their needs are.

An excellent example of a survey was done by the Monroe County Community School Corporation and can be found at monon.mccsc.edu/survey.html.

Consider surveying the parents as well, to determine their feelings about computer technology in school. The Parent Forum of Atwater Elementary in Shorewood, Wisconsin has posted survey questions, results, and recommendations at www.uwm.edu/~reed/survey.html.

Our school is writing a grant proposal to fund new technology. To substantiate our request, we find that we need more extensive information than we have on how technology affects learning. What are some resources we could consult?

The Mid-continental Education Research Laboratory has an excellent resource on the impact of technology, posted at www.mcrel.org/connect/tech/impact.html. For information on how technology improves student performance, and on how it changes teaching and learning, visit www.whitehouse.gov/WH/EOP/OP/html/edtech/html/edtech.html.

We're just getting our computer lab set up and are going to start teaching keyboarding to elementary students. Any suggestions for software that could help?

At www.microweb.com/pepsite/Software/Reviews/jun96.html, you'll find a good review of children's typing programs online. It includes a list of features to look for in a typing program and a review of 10 programs on the market now.

Have ideas, comments, or questions about technology? You can E-mail webeditor@dear.nea.org or write to Dear Webeditor, NEA Center for Education Technology, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036.

Friendly User

'Education Is About Sharing'

Robert Bruck

Kentucky teacher Kim Farris (left) traveled to Patricia Fox's fourth grade classroom to get a hands-on view of how technology can be integrated into teaching. These teachers were paired through Teachers to the Power of Two (T²), a program co-sponsored by the Kentucky Education Association that lets teachers assist other teachers.

Who:
Patricia Fox, fourth grade teacher, Jesse Stuart Elementary School, Madisonville, Kentucky.

E-mail address:
foxp@hopkins.k12.ky.us

What:
A teacher who's adept at using the wealth of technological resources at her school now participates in a program that lets her share her expertise with other educators.

Inspiration:
"I consider myself extremely lucky. I teach at a brand-new school that has many technological resources. In my classroom I have the newest Apple computer, a color printer, CD ROM, E-mail, and access to the Internet.

"My students can put up their own advertisements over the closed-circuit TV. I use a ZAP camera, which captures pictures on a disk that can be retrieved on a computer, for field trips and special student projects.

"All of this technology can really enhance the curriculum. So I love the idea of showing people all the possibilities with integrative technology.

"That's why the Teachers to the Power of Two program, run by the Kentucky Education Association, is wonderful. It sets aside funds for teachers to go to other schools and observe the classroom.

"Kim Farris, a teacher at Dixon Elementary, came to see our school for a whole day. I showed her the building, the programs we have, the computers. Having visited my school, she has a better idea of the kind of technology she's interested in because she can say, 'I saw this at Jesse Stuart Elementary, and it works for them.'"

Since visiting Fox's classroom, Farris has introduced a computer with reading and math programs to her classroom.

"Talking with another teacher and being able to see what she's doing is more beneficial than reading a book or hearing a lecture on the same material," says Farris.

"The reading and math programs that I've introduced make it more enjoyable for my students to work on their reading and math skills.

"The students are excited about learning when they get on these programs. It's almost another way to teach the material.

"Visiting Jesse Stuart Elementary showed me how technology enhanced communication between teachers through E-mail and opened up the possibilities for finding resources.

"These are both important for my school, which is located in a rural area. We have limited contacts with other schools and limited access to resources—the nearest museum is 45 minutes away.

"We're still in the process lof getting more technology. But hopefully in the next year or so, we will expand."

Click:
"Education is about sharing," notes Fox. "It's not about going into the classroom and closing the door. It' about sharing ideas with other teachers—because this affects the lives of all children.

The Lesson:
Fax and Farris are participants in the Teachers to the Power of Two Program (T²). This program connects two teachers—one who's integrated technological resources into the curriculum, and one who wants to learn about them.

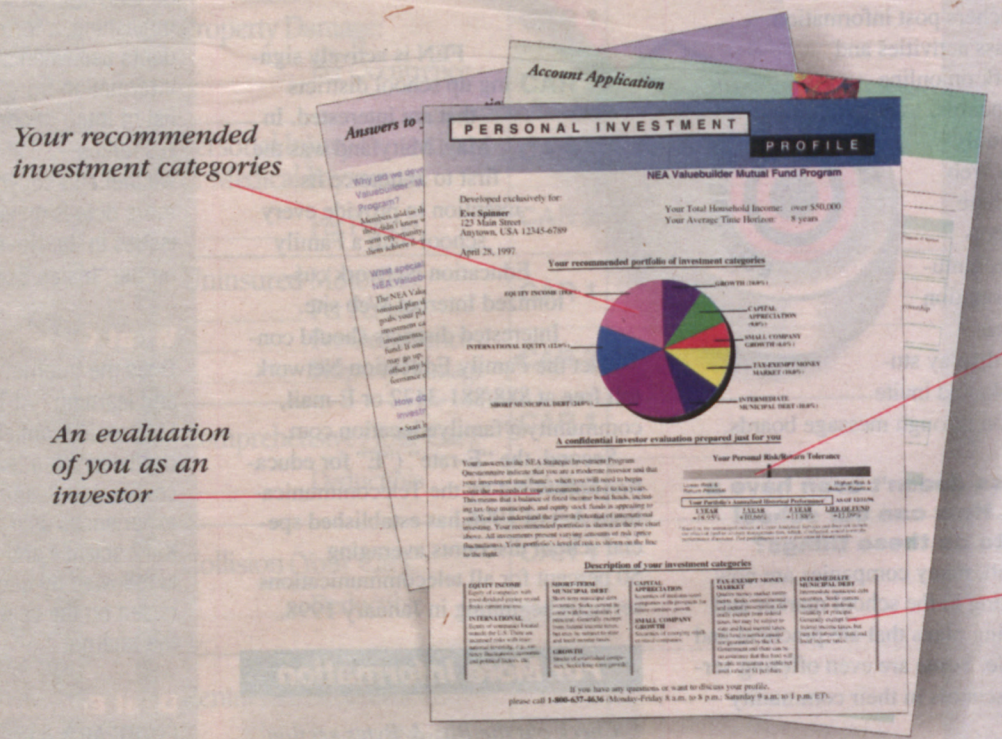
Started in 1993, T² has enabled 1,200 teachers to visit other classrooms to observe and plan joint strategies for solving classroom problems. The projects sponsors, the Kentucky Education Association and the Partnership for Kentucky Schools, provide travel expenses and substitutes for participants.

For More Information

The catalog for the Teachers to the Power of Two (T²) program lists more than 300 teachers ready to help other teachers. Their areas of expertise include technology, assessment, portofolios, professional development, school-based decision-making, and special ed.

To find out more about the T² program, contact the Kentucky Education Association at 800/231-4532, ext. 315, or visit the Web at www.kea.org/members/T2/index.html.

Need a plan to help you invest in mutual funds?


Your recommended investment categories
An evaluation of you as an investor
Your comfort level with investment risk
A description of your recommended investment categories
Account Application
PERSONAL INVESTMENT PROFILE
NEA Valuebuilder Mutual Fund Program
Developed exclusively for:
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Your Total Household Income: over $50,000
Your Average Time Horizon: 8 years
April 28, 1997
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A confidential investor evaluation prepared just for you
Your Personal Risk/Return Tolerance
Description of your investment categories

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Heads Up!

TV Tips

Wonderful World of Disney
ABC, Sundays, 7-9 p.m. ET. This Sunday night tradition returns, offering more than 30 family-friendly films and original features. Upcoming titles include *Oliver Twist*, *Toothless*, and *Gold Rush: A Real Life Alaskan Adventure*. For a study guide produced by KIDSNET, call 800/647-4ABC.

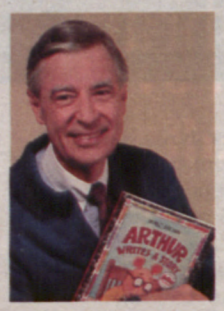
Bonehead Detectives Of the Paleoworld
Discovery Channel, Sundays, 9:30 a.m. ET. This series introduces kids to the mysteries of paleontology. Kid hosts review material while debating the extinction of dinosaurs and other prehistoric creatures.

New School Order
PBS, Friday, October 3, 10-11 p.m. ET. This documentary captures a real-life drama as fiscally and socially conservative school board members in a suburban Pennsylvania school district battle for more control over the schools and children's education.

A.R.K.: Animal Rescue Kids
Discovery Channel, series premieres Sunday, October 5, 10:30-11 a.m. ET. This show features four daring kids who rescue animals all over the world by using the Internet and by contacting animal experts and celebrities interested in animal causes.

Wimzie's House
PBS, Sunday, October 12, 10-10:30 a.m. ET. This top-rated Canadian series for preschoolers features the engaging adventures of five-year-old Wimzie and her family. Along with her three puppet monster friends, Wimzie learns caring and sharing in a home day-care setting unlike any other.

Two Women
Showtime, Sunday, October 5, 8-10 p.m. ET. The first in a trilogy called *Rescuers: Portraits of Moral Courage in the Holocaust*, this program tells the story of two women—one Polish Catholic, the other French Catholic—who saved lives during the Holocaust. For a study guide produced by KIDSNET, call 202/291-1400.



Arthur
PBS, Monday, October 20, check local listings for time. This animated children's series, based on the popular books by Marc Brown, returns with new shows, including a visit by Fred (Mister) Rogers. You can visit Arthur online at www.pbs.org/arthur.

USA High
USA Network, weekdays, 5:30-6 p.m. ET. This new series features a hip group of high school students from vastly different backgrounds—but adds a twist—a French twist, to be exact. The six seniors attend the only American high school in Paris.

Tower of Terror
ABC, Sunday, October 26, 7-9 p.m. ET. When lightning hit a Hollywood hotel in 1939, five people vanished. This Disney special takes place 60 years later when a journalist and his spunky niece try to solve the mystery.

The Adventures of Captain Planet
WB Television Network, October, weekdays, 7:30-8 a.m. ET. This animated series, dedicated to educating children about environmental issues, follows the adventures of Captain Planet and the Planeteers as they battle eco-villains who roam the Earth.

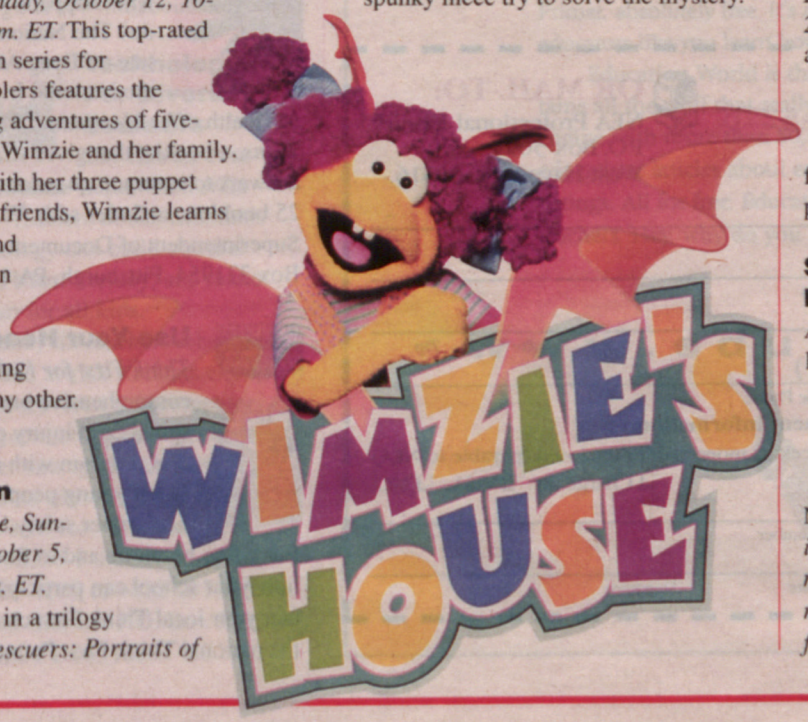
Wishbone: Halloween Hound
PBS, October 15, 8-9 p.m. ET. This prime-time episode finds canine star Wishbone imagining he's Ichabod Crane coming paw-to-hoof with the Headless Horseman from the Washington Irving classic, *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*.

Hope
TNT, October 19, 8-10 p.m. ET. This drama tells the story of a young girl whose world becomes a frightening place when racism and hypocrisy surface in her segregated town in the 1960s.

Wolves at Our Door
Discovery Channel, Monday, October 27, 8-9 p.m. ET. Scientists say wolves are among the most misunderstood creatures in North America. In this documentary, flimmaker Jim Dutcher shows what he learned from spending six years living near a pack of wolves in Idaho.

Schoolhouse Rock Exploration Station
ABC, Saturday mornings. These popular three-minute musical vignettes return to ABC, airing twice on Saturday mornings.

These listings are provided by KIDSNET, *a national computerized clearinghouse for children's electronic media. For more listings and support materials on the Web, go to www.familyeducation.com/kidsnet.asp.*



school stories

Want to know what's really happening inside America's schools? *School Stories*, produced by NEA and The Learning Channel, tackles the tough issues on and off campus and offers lessons of hope. Here's the schedule for the next several programs. Note the change in days and times.

Technology: Hype or Hope?
Sunday, October 12, 9 a.m. ET. Is all the effort and expense of wiring classrooms and schools to the Internet worth the effort? *School Stories* travels to Princeton, New Jersey, for some answers.

If Teachers Fail. . . Fix or Fire?
Sunday, October 19, 9 a.m. ET. Take a look at the Columbus, Ohio, peer assistance and review program, which puts veteran teachers in charge of helping first-year teachers and peers in trouble.

Saving City Schools
Sunday, October 26, 9 a.m. ET. Can the nation's worst schools recover? A look at how Chicago schools are turning the corner—as parents, teachers, administrators, and community leaders take charge.

Space Camp Challenge
Sunday, November 2, 9 a.m. ET. At Space Camp in Huntsville, Alabama, a group of 16 Michigan special education students reaches for the stars.

High Stakes Testing
Sunday, November 9, 9 a.m. ET. Two years ago, Milwaukee schools were in the media spotlight when only 21 percent of their senior-level students passed a math exam required to graduate. Watch a well-publicized failure become a success story in this episode.

BONUS: An added plus for NEA members: Each episode of *School Stories* is available on video after airing. For details or to order tapes, call the NEA Professional Library at 800/229-4200. In addition, educators have permission to tape the shows for future educational use.

Heads Up

Free or Inexpensive

Family Reading Night
Build a community of readers with the Family Reading Night Kit. Available from Advantage Learning Systems, Inc., this kit offers suggestions and checklists for bringing parents and students together. For a free copy, call 800/338-4204, ext. 2506.

Celebrate the Century
The United States Postal Service is offering free teaching materials as part of *Celebrate the Century*, a program using stamps to teach about the 20th century. Designed for grades 3-6, the kit contains a teacher's guide, student activities, and more. Order by October 15 to receive the free materials for two years. Write to Celebrate the Century, U.S. Postal Service, P.O. Box 44342, Washington, DC 20078-0026.

Enrich your teaching with the newest books from the NEA Professional Library.

Want to learn 15 tips to prepare for a first teaching job...to gain winning ideas for opening lines of communication with parents...and more? **Bright Ideas** is for you. This pocket-size book of checklists includes a Bonus Section of Top 10 Lists of Bright Ideas for New Teachers, collected from educators nationwide.
56 pp., 1997, Stock #2153-3-00-D,
Non-members $5.95,
NEA Members $4.50

Portfolio Practices shows you how to develop alternatives to traditional examinations and avoid the pitfalls and backlash that many of your colleagues have faced. You'll learn the "nuts and bolts" of student portfolios, to think about assessment in fresh ways, and strategies for keeping your innovative assessment practices from being stifled.
160 pp., 1997, Stock #1858-3-00-D,
Non-members $16.95,
NEA Members $14.95

Moving to the Block answers your questions on how, why, and when you should move from a traditional schedule to a block schedule. It not only helps you determine if "the block" can work for you, but gives you guidelines for implementing the new schedule and assessing its impact on student achievement.
56 pp., 1997, Stock #2159-2-00-D,
Non-members $5.95,
NEA Members $4.50

Technology for Diverse Learners
Six teachers who work with ESL and at-risk students candidly share their stories of how they discovered that computers and video technology succeed where other strategies fall short. You'll look at how technology can build cultural awareness, boost literacy, and make learning fun for all kids.
96 pp., 1997, Stock # 2908-9-00-D,
Non-members $12.95, ***NEA Members $9.95***

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Black Child Magazine

Black Child Magazine is offering teachers a free year-long subscription. The magazine covers a variety of topics, including education and parenting. Send $3.50 to cover s&h to Black Child Magazine, P.O. Box 12048, Atlanta, GA 30355.

Wheelchair Friendships

Do you want to be a friend to someone in a wheelchair? *Discovering People on Wheels* is a free resource and coloring book from the Inglis House. Write to the Inglis House, c/o Public Relations, 2600 Belmont Ave., Philadelphia, PA 19131. Ask for "Walking with People on Wheels."

Equity & Justice

Rethinking Schools: Resources for Equity & Social Justice offers materials that can help teachers, parents, and students working day by day toward a more humane society. To order a free catalog, call 800/669-4192 or write Rethinking Schools, 1001 E. Keefe Ave., Milwaukee, WI 53212.

Marijuana Talk

Why do young people use marijuana? And what happens if they do? The National Institute on Drug Abuse and the National Institutes of Health offer *Marijuana: Facts for Teens,* a booklet that gives straight answers to common questions. $29 for 25 booklets, includes s&h. Write to Superintendent of Documents, P.O. Box 371954, Pittsburgh, PA 15250.

Use Your Head

Think First for Kids is a comprehensive brain and spinal cord injury prevention program with a mission to get young people to practice proper safety behavior. For a free brochure and to find out how your school can participate, contact your local Think First chapter or the national Think First Foundation,

Heads Up

22 South Washington St., Park Ridge, IL 60068, 800/THINK56. On the Web: www.thinkfirst.org.

Balance and Motion

Newbridge Big Books has added another topic to its popular series of oversized books—the topsy-turvy topic of balance. For a copy of *Balance and Motion*, plus a teaching guide, send $16.95 (plus 10 percent of order amount—$3 minimum—for s&h) to Newbridge Educational Publishing, P.O. Box 6002, Delran, NJ 08370-6002, or call 800/867-0307.

Intergenerational Pen Pals

Pen-Friends Across the Nation is a nationwide, intergenerational writing project pairing junior or senior high school students with older adults in the community.

The free curriculum kit published by the National Postal Museum shows how to set up the project and choose a local cultural site. For information, call 202/357-2991.

Made in America

To help your students understand the importance of buying American, take a look at *Made in the USA: The Complete Guide to America's Finest Products*. $15 plus $4 s&h, discounts available for unions and bulk orders.

Contact Made in the USA Foundation, 1925 K St., N.W., Suite 100, Washington, DC 20006, 800/USA-PRIDE or go to www.madeusa.org.

Technology For Diverse Learners

The newest best-seller from *NEA Teacher-to-Teacher Books* examines how technology can build cultural awareness, boost literacy, and make learning fun for all kids.

In the book, six teachers who work with ESL and at-risk students explain how they discovered that computers and video technology can succeed where other strategies fall short.

$12.95 plus s&h for nonmembers, $9.95 plus s&h for NEA members. Use stock #2908-9-10-FF. To order, call 800/229-4200 or write to NEA Professional Library, P.O. Box 509, West Haven, CT 06516.

Kids for Kids

When poet and artist Leslie Ann Michaels heard about the Oklahoma City bombing tragedy, she collected poems, letters, and pictures from 3,000 kids across the country, depicting their feelings about the event. The result: *Kids for Kids: Messages of Hope from the Nation's Children*. If your school sells the book as a fundraiser, you keep 40 percent of proceeds—the rest goes to Oklahoma City schools to supplement counseling costs and fund arts education programs. $12.95 plus $2 s&h. For details, call 800/603-9024.

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Events

American Education Week

Plan now to celebrate American Education Week, November 16-22, by generating support and appreciation for America's public schools.

This year's theme, "Teaching Children to Think and Dream," is designed to remind people that schools provide students with both skills and hope for the future—and that schools can be places of learning, intelligence, and wonder.

For help in creating your local celebration, NEA sends an American Education Week kit—complete with ideas, hints, sample press releases, scripts for radio public service announcements, a poster, and more—to the president of each NEA local affiliate.

Community

A place where you can drop in anytime, where you can stretch your thinking — and your imagination, where you can complain, rejoice, ponder or laugh out loud.

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Learning Community
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For more information visit http://helpfrom.nea.org on the World Wide Web.

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Visit NEA's newest Web area at http://helpfrom.nea.org

End Domestic Violence

Each year, more than 4 million American women are physically abused by an intimate partner, and more than 3.3 million children are exposed to violent incidents between their parents or guardians.

October is Work To End Domestic Violence Month. If you or someone you know needs a referral to a domestic violence program near you, call 800/799-SAFE. For a free guide and resource list, write to End Domestic Violence, NEA Human and Civil Rights, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036 or go to www.nea.org and search "domestic violence."

Africans in America

At the national meeting of the National Council for the Social Studies, November 21-23 in Cincinnati, Ohio, educators will have a chance to preview clips and educational materials for a fall 1998 PBS show, *Africans in America*.

At the conference, filmmaker Orlando Bagwell will ask and answer the question: "How can we help an increasingly diverse student body envision a society without racism?"

At another workshop, educators will explore a new framework for teaching about the American Revolution by using clips of the PBS series.

For more information about the NCSS conference, call 202/966-7840 or go to www.ncss.org.

Hate Crimes

President Clinton will host the White House Conference on Hate Crimes on Monday, November 10.

Attendance at the conference is limited, but the United States Department of Justice urges educators to use the event to spur classroom discussion on bias and stereotyping, which can lead to hate crimes, and strategies for helping kids break the cycle of prejudice and violence.

For more information, go to www.whitehouse.gov. Also look to the November issue of *NEA Today* for an interview with Attorney General Janet Reno on the topic of school safety.

Trick-or-Treat for UNICEF

This year is the 50th anniversary of the United States Committee for UNICEF.

Heads Up

Since 1950, National UNICEF Month and Trick-or-Treat for UNICEF have raised over $100 million in support of the world's children.

Money raised this year will be used to focus attention on the urgent worldwide effort to end hazardous and exploitive child labor.

Free classroom materials—for kids in grades 1-12, in English and Spanish—help students understand the issues underlying the child labor crisis and encourage students to explore the differences in the work children do in different parts of the world.

To get the free kit, call 800/FOR-KIDS. For details and other educational materials, go to www.unicef.org and www.unicefusa.org.

Grants

Girls Sports

New or existing sports programs that serve junior high and middle schools are eligible for the Tampax Grants for Girls Sports Program. Funded by the Women's Sports Foundation and Tampax, grants are $500 each and support sports and fitness programs that serve girls ages nine to 14.

Deadline: December 5. For more information, contact Tampax Grants for Girls Sports Program, Women's Sports Foundation, Eisenhower Park, East Meadow, New York, NY 11554, 800/227-3988.

Coca-Cola Grants

The Coca-Cola Foundation provides grants to support education projects, including those that link pre-college and higher education and address early childhood education. There are no deadlines. For more information, contact the Grants Administrator, Coca-Cola Foundation Grants Program, P.O. Drawer 1734, Atlanta, GA 30301, 404/676-2568.

Consumer Science

Educators working on graduate degrees in the United States are eligible for American Association of Family & Consumer Sciences Foundation Fellowships. One $5,000 and some $3,000 awards will support graduate study in family consumer sciences.

Deadline: December 31. For more information, contact the Awards, Fellowships, & Grants Office at AAFCS, 1555 King St., Alexandria, VA 22314, 703/706-4600.

Elementary Science

The CIBA Exemplary Science Teaching Awards for exemplary science teaching performance are given to one elementary school teacher, one middle school or junior high school teacher, and one senior high school teacher.

Deadline: November 14. Contact National Science Teachers Awards Programs, 1840 Wilson Blvd., Arlington, VA 22209, 703/243-7100.

Awards

Reading

Classroom teachers and reading specialists who work with students in grades 7-12 are eligible to apply for the annual Nila Banton Smith Award.

Funded by the International Reading Association, the $1,000 award recognizes a middle or secondary class-

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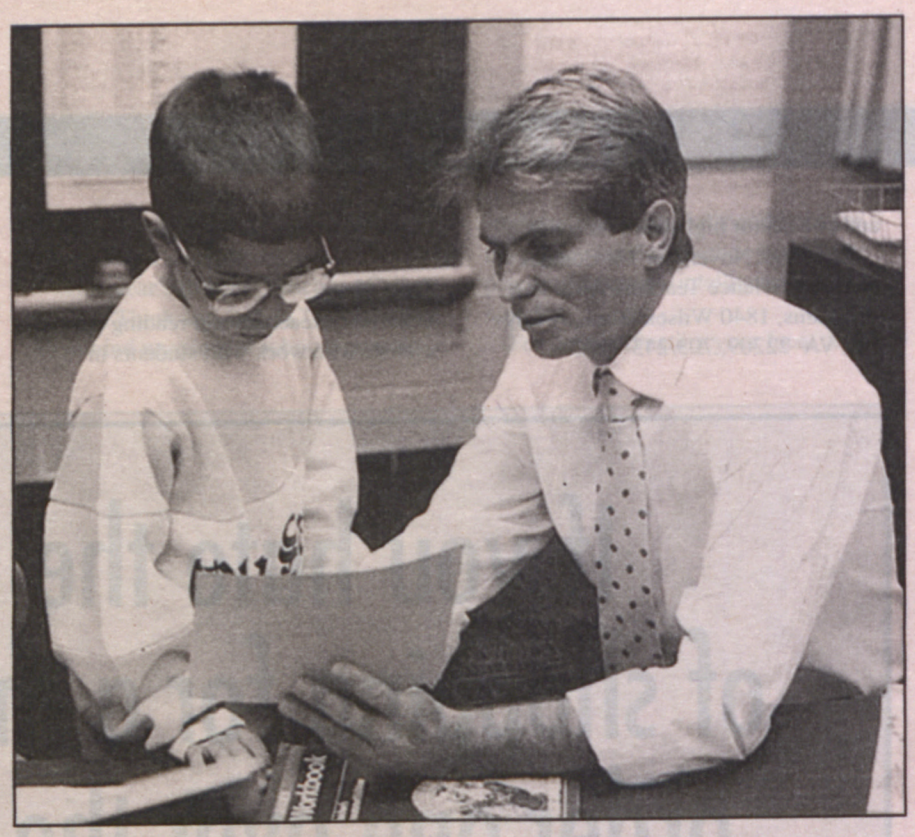

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room teacher or reading specialist who has made an outstanding contribution in helping students become more proficient readers.

Deadline: November 15. For more information, contact the International Reading Association, P.O. Box 8139, Newark, DE 19714, 302/731-1600.

Elementary Reading

The Eleanor M. Johnson Award, funded by the International Reading Association, awards $1,000 to an outstanding elementary reading or language arts classroom teacher.

Applicants must be International Reading Association members, have a minimum of five years teaching experience, and be endorsed by four individuals. Deadline: November 15. For more information, contact International Reading Association, Executive Office, P.O. Box 8139, Newark, DE 19714-8139, 302/731-1600.

American Heroes

The Reader's Digest Association, Inc. seeks nominations for its 1998 American Heroes in Education Awards, a national program to honor teachers and principals who are making a difference in schools across America.

Individual teachers and principals, or teams of up to six educators, will receive $5,000, with an additional $10,000 going to their schools to support the programs that won them national recognition.

Any teacher, principal, or administrator may nominate a fellow educator. Deadline: December 5. For more information, contact Claudia Edwards, director of the Reader's Digest American Heroes in Education Awards, The Reader's Digest Association, Inc., Reader's Digest Road, Pleasantville, NY 10570-7000, 914/244-2030.

Character Counts

The Character Counts! Coalition, a nonpartisan alliance of organizations dedicated to children—including the NEA—has launched a nationwide search to find and celebrate young people of exceptional character.

The coalition encourages schools and community groups to establish local awards. Winners of local awards will be eligible for national awards.

Local awards must be presented on or before April 30, 1998. National entries must be postmarked by May 15. For a Character Counts! awards kit, call 800/711-2670. Or go to www.charactercounts.org.

ThinkQuest Awards

ThinkQuest, the world's largest Internet learning competition, is sponsoring three new awards:

1) *The Collaboration Award* for the team with participants from schools with the greatest differences in technology resources; 2) *The Gem Award* for the team with an entry from a previous ThinkQuest contest year that hasn't won an award, but has since become broadly used; and 3) *The Java Award* for three teams whose entries have made the most innovative use of a Java application.

Students and teachers can find details about the ThinkQuest contest at www.advanced.org/thinkquest.

Web Winners

Bill Nye

Bill Nye the Science Guy has a Web site loaded with activities, science facts and features, and links to hundreds of other dynamic scientific Web sites. Go to http://nyelabs.kcts.org/.

Kid Patrol

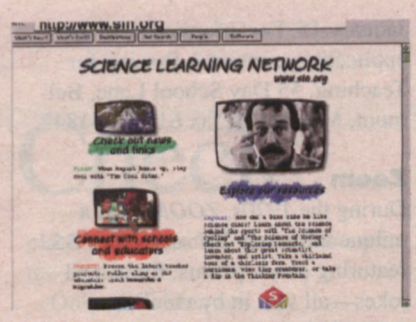
Go online to help find missing children. Kid Patrol—the online safety program created by America Online, its subsidiary Digital City, and the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children—will post photos of and information about missing kids on Digital City's regional online sites and at www.digitalcity.com.

Math Challenges

Here's a site offering math problems for students and teachers. You'll find Megamath at www.c3.lanl.gov/mega.math/.

Negro Baseball Leagues

Here's a great site with lots of graphics and information about the players and teams and their place in baseball history. Check out Black Baseball's Negro Baseball Leagues at www.blackbaseball.com.



Science Learning

Here's a site loaded with facts, figures, images, and science stories and experiments, all courtesy of the National Science Foundation. Check out the Science Learning Network at www.sln.org.

Women's History

The National Women's History Project has a Web site loaded with information, little known facts, and project details and materials. Take a look at www.nwhp.org.

Multicultural Resources

Looking for multicultural education resources? The staff and students at the University of Virginia School of Education have a Web site for you. Check it out at http://curry.edschool.virginia.edu/go/multicultural.

Real and Mythic Creatures

Curious about dragons and dragonlore? This site looks at creatures, real and mythic, from all over the world. Take a look at www.ozemail.com.au/~oban/.

Playground Safety

Playground accidents account for thousands of injuries each year. Here's a site that will help you make sure your playground's safe or tell you what to do if it isn't. Check it out at www.uni.edu/playground/.

Grants

Do you need help writing grants? Are you looking for grant resources? This site will tell you where the money is and how to get to it. Call it up at web.fie.com/cws/sra/resource.htm.

Kids Health

Here's a site devoted to the health of children and teens. It's full of advice and information on childhood illnesses and preventive care. Go to http://KidsHealth.org/index2.html.

Grammar Questions

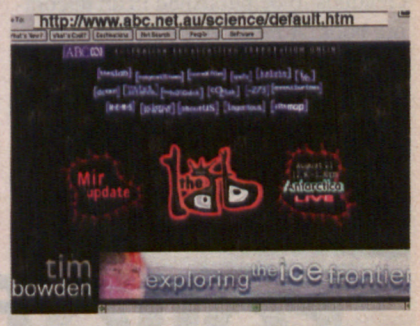
Got a grammar question? The Grammar Lady has the answer—and much more. Go to www.grammarlady.com.

Dinosaurs

Everything you need to know about dinosaurs, written in a kids' newspaper format with search capabilities. Check out the Dinosaur Interplanetary Gazette at www.dinosaur.org.

Science Lab

Dubbed one of the coolest sites for kids, The Lab offers interactive experiments, games, and plenty of science facts. Take a look at www.abc.net.au/science/default.htm.



Elementary Art Education

This site shares lesson plans, curriculum ideas, art projects, and more, all of it compiled and coordinated by an art educator. Take a look at www.dhc.net/~artgeek/index.html.

Geometry Projects

Here's a site offering geometry projects, resources, and research for K-16 students and teachers. You can find it at www.geomn.umn.edu.

Contests

Girls Know Best

Beyond Words Publishing is looking for female authors ages six to 16 to write advice and activity chapters for a book that will follow the success of *Girls Know Best: Advice for Girls from Girls on Just About Everything*.

If your students are interested, have them write two or three pages of a chapter idea—useful advice or fun activities for girls. Deadline: October 31. Send entries to Girl Writer Contest, Beyond Words Publishing, Inc, 20827 N.W. Cornell Rd., Suite 500, Hillsboro, OR 97124-9808. Winners will be announced January 1, 1998.

Name That Ship

The U.S. Navy is asking students in grades K-12 nationwide to name one of its new ships. The ship, an oceano-

Heads Up

graphic ship, is currently under construction and is scheduled for launch in late 1998.

Students can form teams to research and propose a name and prepare a related project to support and justify their proposed name. For deadlines, rules, and related information, set your browser to http://oceanographer.navy.mil.

Opportunities

Share Your Passion

What ideas and experiences have kept you vital, changing, and growing on the job?

If you've been working for 15 years or more, the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation invites you to submit essays (up to 800 words), poems, illustrations, plays, or other artistic creations to be published in an upcoming book, *A Passion for Teaching*.

Deadline for applications: November 15. Deadline for submissions: January 15. For information or an application, contact A Passion for Teaching, 55 Day School Lane, Belmont, MA 02178, fax 617/489-1842.

Zoom

During the 1970s, *ZOOM* was a unique kids-only TV series on PBS, featuring plays, poems, films, and jokes—all sent in by viewers.

WGBH, the Boston PBS station that created the series, is producing a new *ZOOM* and looking for contributions from kids in grades 4-8.

If your students have come up with short stories, science projects, brain teasers, plays, and more, submit them to *ZOOM*, Box 350, Boston, MA 02134. For details, send E-mail to Marcy_Gardner@wgbh.org.

Volunteer in India

Colorado NEA member Shirley Smithson recently spent three weeks in India, not on vacation, but volunteering for Project India, a program run by U.S.-based, non-profit Cross-Cultural Solutions.

If you're interested in joining Cross-Cultural Solutions, visit the project Web site at http://emol.org/emol/projectindia or call 800/380-4777.

No skills or experience are required. Volunteers pay their own airfare and a tax-deductible fee of $1,650 to cover all expenses in India.

Announcements

NEA Training Cadres

To help NEA members better address the many education and Association challenges they face, the NEA's Human and Civil Rights division recently established two new training cadres, the National Diversity Training Cadre and the National Minority Leadership Training Cadre.

The cadres—made up of 20 NEA members from around the country—will conduct training sessions on such topics as visioning, decision making, understanding and valuing cultural differences, and diversity.

The training sessions will begin this fall in conjunction with state and local training projects, NEA conferences, and NEA regional seminars. For more information, call 202/822-7700.

Corrections

Hunt for History

The National Museum of American History's *Hunt for History* brochure—listed as a free resource in *NEA Today*—is intended for use in the museum, not the classroom. The museum will be unable to fill mail requests but will reserve copies for teachers planning to visit the museum with their students.

Academic Standards

The correct number for a free brochure from the Education Excellence Partnership—"Strengthening Your Child's Academic Future"—is 800/38-BE-SMART.

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In the Light Lane

'No Money–Only a Check'

When I was an elementary librarian, I tried to expose my students to non-fiction books in an attempt to awaken all those hidden interests.

One day, a third grader approached me with a cookbook titled *The Pet's Cookbook*, full of recipes for dog food, cat food, and various pet treats.

"Ahh," I thought. "A budding cook."

"Mrs. Shaw," the student asked, "why would anyone want to cook their pet?"

Janet Shaw
Newark, Delaware

It was picture day for my kindergartners, and envelopes had been sent home a few days earlier so parents could enclose their payment. On picture day, I received a call from a parent informing me that her child's money was in the zippered compartment of his backpack.

When it came time to collect the money, I reminded this student that his mother said to check his backpack. He came back and told me that there wasn't any money.

I told him to look again, and this time he came back and said, "No, there's no money—only a check."

Louise Murray
Braintree, Massachusetts

I noticed that she'd incorrectly included "putting" on her list and advised her that this was not a compound.

She insisted that it was, so I asked, "What two words do you see in 'putting'?"

"'Put' and 'ting,'" she replied.

"'Ting' is not a word," I said.

"Yes, it is," she insisted. "It's my father's name!"

Maryanne Mead
Bridgewater, New Jersey

While accompanying my seventh graders on a week-long environmental ed program, one of my young group members grabbed a strainer and charged into the swamp to catch aquatic critters.

I was delighted to see this reluctant classroom learner thoroughly enjoy this activity. The, er, climax came when he raised his strainer victoriously and shouted, "Hey, Ms. Cross, there's all kind of mini-orgasms in here!"

Connie Cross
Windham, Maine

"We have to do homework, Joey. It's what separates man from the apes."

I assigned my first-period civics class 10 vocabulary words and asked the students to not only define them, but to write a short story using each term so I could check comprehension.

Shawn obviously didn't comprehend the terms "political party" or "two-party system," but at least he made me smile.

"Every month, Bob would throw a wild 'political party,'" wrote Shawn. "He would serve sodas, chips, and dip. Sometimes he believed in the 'two-party system.' That's when he'd have two parties in one month!"

Al Sturgeon
Paragould, Arkansas

During a language arts lesson, a first grade student of Asian descent presented me with her completed list of compound words.

While I was giving a national standardized test to my first graders, one of the very bright boys raised his hand for help. I went over and saw he was stuck on the definition of the word "cellar."

He whispered to me that the correct answer was not there—adding that "a place to keep wine" was not one of the choices.

Only in California!

Jackie Panigada
Fontana, California

On the elementary report card used in my school district, student progress is evaluated on a scale of 1-4. Skill areas that are not being evaluated for a marking period are designated with a slash (/).

After looking over his report card, one of my first graders proudly informed his parents that he'd received 23 threes, 43 fours—and a few spares.

Patricia Kuxhaus
Northville, Michigan

As a follow-up to the third grade field trip to the supermarket, I did some ESL coaching of Carlos on the different departments that we'd found there.

"Carlos," I asked, "in what part of the store did you see the bananas and apples?"

He answered, "In the fruit."

"And," I continued, "where did you find the hamburger and the pork chops?"

He replied, "In the meat."

Then I asked, "In what department were the cakes and doughnuts?"

His not-too-certain answer: "In the . . . junk food?"

Salvatore Parlato
Rochester, New York

A few days after a new student had joined my class, I received a message from her mother asking me to provide a list of school supplies that her daughter would be needing.

At the end of the day, I sat down with the student to go over the supply list. First I asked her if she had crayons, and she said yes. Then I asked if she had Magic Markers.

She looked at me strangely for a moment and said, "Well, I have markers, but they're not magic."

Carol Nanney
McKenzie, Tennessee

Family Affair

During Halloween, I had two first grade boys complete an unfinished drawing of a cat. When they were done, I asked one of them to show me the cat's paw.

He looked intently at the picture but made no reply.

Again, I asked, "Where's the cat's paw?"

After being asked a third time, the boy finally replied, "I reckon he's at work."

Denise Davis
Rural Retreat, Virginia

On a high school selection form, my eighth graders were asked, "Whom do you live with?" One girl wrote her father's name.

The next line on the form said, "Relationship."

She answered, "Good."

Tammy Luebke
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

In my sixth grade exploratory foreign language class, we made a comparison chart of family words in several languages. From this, students would create a family portrait.

One girl volunteered the word "jerk" in Italian. "I think we should include this word on our chart," she noted, "because some families might have jerks in them."

Jewell Kern
Wheeling, Illinois

Our school's language survey asks, "What languages do you speak to your child?" and provides two blanks.

One mother, more candid than most, wrote, "English" and "loud English."

Kathleen DeHerrera
Pueblo, Colorado

Got Laughs?

Have a funny school story, anecdote, or vignette you'd like to share? You can send contributions to "In the Light Lane," *NEA Today*, 1201 16th St. N.W., Washington, DC 20036.
Fax: 202/822-7206
E-mail: NEAToday@aol.com

Or you can post your contribution—and read more stories—on *NEA Today*'s Web site. Just point your Web browser to **www.nea.org/neatoday** and click on "In the Light Lane."

People

From Alfalfa to 'Astro' Turf

Cross one alfalfa field with the universe and a few rescued telescopes, and you get Alfalfa Centauri, an environmental learning project created by Minnesota teachers **Jim Ballard** and **David Schultz**.

In the middle of 100 acres of wetlands in rural Rapidan, they've built an observatory that houses photo equipment, a central building for computers, and 25 telescopes.

"The largest is 24 inches with a reflector—the second largest in the state of Minnesota," notes Ballard (below, left), an earth science teacher at Lake Crystal Wellcome Memorial High School in Garden City. "We even have one telescope with a camera that was used on a U2 spy plane."

Ballard and Schultz salvaged the telescopes from an old building scheduled to be demolished at Macalester College, where Schultz's father taught astronomy.

Their creation now attracts students in droves. "I've had kids from Minneapolis doing a project on light pollution from the moon when it was 15 degrees below zero," says Schultz, a band director at Lake Crystal Wellcome Memorial Middle School. "We had hair dryers blowing on them while they were working because we can't heat the equipment."

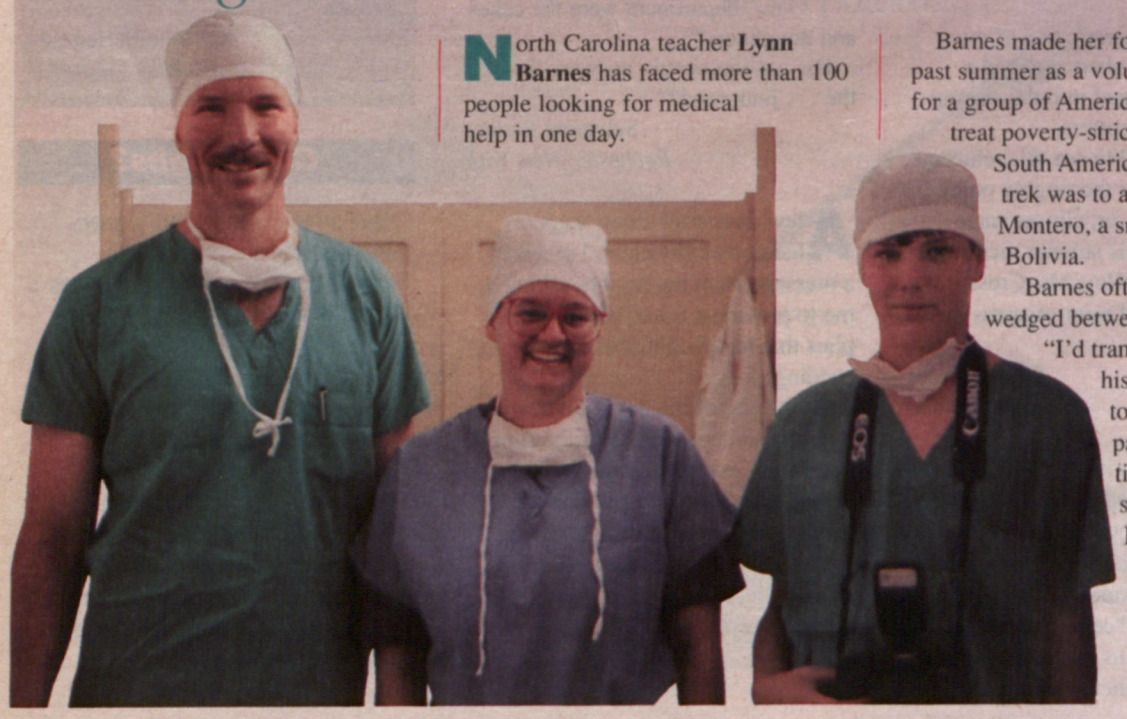
The wetlands were donated, and part of the project funding came from the Minnesota Education Association. But Ballard and Schultz provided a lot of the labor themselves, taking personal days to pour cement and do much of the construction.

Now they're in the next phase of construction, adding wings to the observatory. "We're earning this building because we're building it ourselves," says Ballard. "We haven't done anything magical other than being stubborn."

John Cross

Healing Words in Bolivia

North Carolina teacher **Lynn Barnes** has faced more than 100 people looking for medical help in one day.



Barnes made her fourth trip this past summer as a volunteer interpreter for a group of American doctors who treat poverty-stricken patients in South America. This latest trek was to a hospital in Montero, a small town in Bolivia.

Barnes often found herself wedged between two doctors. "I'd translate a medical history for one doctor, he'd start the patient's examination, and then I'd switch," says Barnes (pictured center, with medical staff).

The high school Spanish teacher conveys medical histories, medication instructions, and even translates during surgical procedures. Barnes explains that her help makes the process more comfortable for the patients and the doctors.

"For some of these patients, medical treatment can be really frightening," says Barnes. "But once I get there, patients calm down. And for the doctors, it isn't nearly as stressful because they don't have to worry about misunderstandings with their patients."

The plight of most of the Montero people makes Barnes's work emotionally exhausting.

"It's hard to see so many children there poor and suffering," Barnes says. "But I cope by thinking about what's being done for them, and not what they've been through."

Don Stevenson

No Skipping in **Her Town**

In Guadalupe, Arizona, Vice Mayor **Veronica Flores** is taking charge to rein in the community's high truancy and dropout rate.

As administrative secretary at McClintock High School, Flores has seen her community of 5,600 people suffer from a graduation rate of only 10 percent.

So when she took office last year, Flores pushed the town council to pay more attention to schools. She persuaded the town and McClintock High to fund the hiring of a youth "liaison" to work one-on-one with students and keep them in school.

Flores was instrumental in hiring a town judge who now works with the council and the schools to enforce the truancy laws. And the vice mayor is educating the county supervisor on truancy issues, working with him to win grants for a mentor program and a computer lab.

"There's quite a difference between making a presentation before a town board and being on that board," Flores observes. "You have a stronger chance to make a difference when you're directly involved in government."

Artists' **Freedom Forum**

"Free your mind through your culture."

So says **Terry Thomas**, a Florida journalism and fine arts teacher, and founder of the African American Cultural Arts Organization.

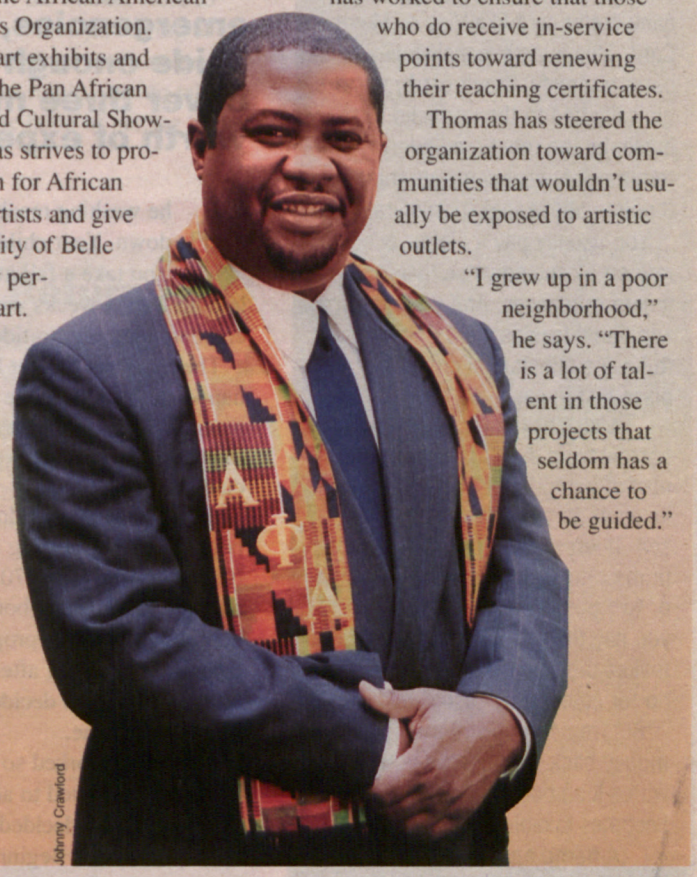
Through art exhibits and events like the Pan African Bookfest and Cultural Showcase, Thomas strives to provide a forum for African American artists and give his community of Belle Glade a new perspective on art.

The AACAO also "puts black artists at the leadership level," says Thomas. "Artists control and keep their creative flavor."

To encourage educators to participate in AACAO's activities, Thomas has worked to ensure that those who do receive in-service points toward renewing their teaching certificates.

Thomas has steered the organization toward communities that wouldn't usually be exposed to artistic outlets.

"I grew up in a poor neighborhood," he says. "There is a lot of talent in those projects that seldom has a chance to be guided."



Johnny Crawford

Spanning the **Globe**

To create or not to create? That was the question facing Maine metal work teacher and blacksmith **Keith Leavitt** last year before he decided to compete in a project to decorate the gates of London's Globe Theatre, where William Shakespeare's plays were once performed.

"I knew the project would be fun, but didn't want to do it alone," says Leavitt. So he invited seven students at Winthrop High School to join him in creating individual pieces of metal art for the gates.

"All eight of our pieces were selected by a specific committee for the gates," says Leavitt. "It is just an incredible honor being placed side by side with professional artists from around the world."

Each piece is based on animals or plants in Shakespeare's plays. Leavitt created two flowers, one a sweet brier rose—a flower that appears in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Among the pieces his students produced were an eel, a primrose, and a violet.

"In high school, I hadn't been too acquainted with 'Willie,'" Leavitt acknowledges. "But now I'm a lot more interested in and inspired by Shakespeare's plays and writings."

Andy Molloy

Money

Coming to Terms.

It's best to have money set aside for financial emergencies. But if you don't, you'll need to look around quickly when a crisis strikes.

Some options to keep in mind:

- A **cash advance** is money you draw on a credit line, usually from a bank credit card like Visa or MasterCard. This is an expensive way to borrow money. Credit card rates are typically tied to the rate paid to banks by the most creditworthy customers. A typical card rate might be 6 points above this "prime" rate.

You usually pay a higher interest rate on a cash advance than on credit card purchases. And you often pay additional fees as well. Still, it pays to have a substantial credit limit in place just in case you need it.

- A **403(b) loan** is money you borrow from a 403(b) retirement plan at work. Most plans allow participants to take loans for any reason. Interest here, too, is tied to the prime rate. But it might be only one or two points above the prime. And you pay the interest to yourself. That makes these loans a good place to go for emergency cash.

But, remember, you must pay the money back. If you leave your job with a loan outstanding, the loan becomes taxable income to you.

- A **home equity credit line** is a line of credit that's available to you when you need it, just like a credit limit on your credit card. You need not use it at all. And if you need more, the credit line allows you to borrow extra funds without starting over.

These lines of credit are typically pegged to the prime rate, but they're lower than credit card rates. Interest you pay is tax deductible, so setting up a home equity line makes a lot of sense.

- A **home equity loan** is an old-fashioned second mortgage. It typically requires an appraisal, perhaps a title search, and may carry some hefty up-front fees, just like a first mortgage. It's a good source for a remodeling project, but too time-consuming for emergency money.
- A **life insurance loan** is money you borrow from a policy that has a built-up cash value. In most cases, you are permitted to take a tax-free policy loan. But if you don't pay the money back, it's subtracted from your death benefit.

For more information on these terms, call NEA Member Benefits at 800/637-4636.

Decisions, Decisions

Tackling Those Budget Busters

To brace yourself for life's big financial emergencies, set aside enough to cover three months' worth of expenses.

The washing machine breaks down. Your child needs braces. You take a fall at work and are laid up for six weeks with only workers' compensation to tide you over.

These are the budget busters. They happen to all of us. The better prepared you are to handle them, the less likely you are to be devastated financially.

Consider Rodney Edmundson, who began teaching reading in Wilson, North Carolina, in 1970. Right out of college, Edmundson bought a mobile home for a piece of property his father gave him. Not long after, he married, built a house, and decided to rent out the mobile home.

The rental worked so well that, as Edmundson started to accumulate a little money, he decided to put it into more real estate. Beginning in 1980, he started buying properties, mostly in Wayne County, where he grew up.

Five years ago, Edmundson, 53, ran into health problems—diabetes and high blood pressure. On his doctor's advice, he had to quit teaching at Rock Ridge Elementary School.

Edmundson had a teacher pension, but it wouldn't have been enough to sustain him without his real estate investments, which now amount to eight rental properties.

"My investments were doing well, so that gave me the opportunity to leave," Edmundson says. "I wanted to keep my income at the same level after retirement as it was while I was teaching, and I was able to do that."

Not everyone is as well prepared as Edmundson, to be sure. But each of us should build a base and take steps to protect what we have.

That means you need insurance protection. And you need a cash safety net or an emergency fund.

Your emergency fund should contain three months' worth of living expenses. That need not be three months' salary, but only what you need to pay the rent or mortgage, repay debt, buy food, and make the car payment.

Kristine Dittmer

Rodney Edmundson "just started putting money aside" at a young age. His investments in real estate paid off when he had to retire early for emergency health reasons.

This money must be easily accessible. Don't tap it for impulse purchases. A short vacation or remodeling the bathroom are not emergencies. This money is for medical bills, brakes for the car, or a spell of unemployment.

If there's talk of layoffs at work, increase your emergency fund. When you must use money from this fund, make repaying it your top priority.

Put your savings into something liquid, where you can get at it without penalty—a bank, a credit union, a money market account or mutual fund.

When you have saved enough to cover three months' worth of expenses, you could use one-third of the savings to buy a 90-day certificate of deposit to earn a better interest rate.

As you accumulate money, focus on the longer term, as Edmundson did—and think about how you'll handle larger problems down the road.

—Mary Rowland

Resources

Financial setbacks can strike anyone at any time. Whether you need money to consolidate bills, finance a home repair, or even fund a much-needed vacation, the NEA Credit Plan is available, exclusively for NEA members. The NEA Credit Plan offers unsecured installment loans from $3,000 to $25,000.

Depending on the amount borrowed, you can take up to 84 months to repay. The entire transaction can be handled quickly and confidentially from the privacy of your own home. There's no application fee, no annual fee, and no penalty for prepayment. For more information, call NEA Member Benefits at 800/637-4636, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., or Saturday, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., ET.

Eye on Retirement

The Feeling Is Mutual (Funds)

Mutual funds are one of the best investment vehicles around for building savings that will supplement your pension and Social Security income in the future.

A mutual fund takes in money from thousands of different investors. The fund's manager then invests that money in certain types of securities, usually stocks, bonds, or money market instruments.

When you invest in a mutual fund, you purchase shares in the fund. The share price, less expenses, is called the net asset value, or NAV. Share prices rise and fall depending on what's happening to the fund's investments.

Most mutual funds are "open-end" funds, meaning you can add your money to the pool, or redeem it, anytime you want. You receive a pro rata share of the dividends, as well as any net profit from the sale of securities. This income can be taken in cash or reinvested in more fund shares.

Among the different types of mutual funds, money market funds are the safest and most stable, paying returns that are, on average, about one to two percentage points higher than the rates paid on bank savings accounts. Stock funds generally have a higher rate of return, but you risk losing money. Bond funds are generally riskier than money market funds but less risky than stock funds.

How do you determine the right mix? Consider these questions:

■ What's your risk tolerance? If you're a risk taker, you might be willing to put a lot of your money in stocks. If not, you should probably invest more heavily in bond funds.

■ Are you diversified? To reduce the overall risk in your portfolio, you should have a mix of different types of investments. If you're heavily invested in stocks, for example, you might want your non-retirement holdings to include a bond and/or money market fund.

■ What are your goals? If you'll need a chunk of money in the next year or two, you may not want to put it in a stock fund, where you could lose principal if the market were to decline. But if you're just trying to build up your savings over the next 10 to 20 years, you might want to take some risk in the hope of getting higher returns.

Worksheet

Evaluating Your Investment Return

How are your mutual funds doing? One way to find out is to start a quarterly performance notebook.

First, list all your investments (stock funds, for example). In the first column, list their value at the beginning of the quarter. In the second column, list their value at the end of the period (including all interest and dividends reinvested). Total the columns.

Then list any money added to or withdrawn from your investments for the quarter. (Consider unreinvested interest or dividends as withdrawals.)

	Beginning	End
Money Market Fund		
Stock Fund		
Bond Fund		
Total Value		
Added (or withdrawn) for the Quarter		
Quarterly Return		

To determine your quarterly return:

1. Multiply your net contributions for the period, excluding reinvested dividends and interest, by 0.5.
2. Subtract the result from the value of your portfolio at the end of the quarter.
3. Again, multiply your net contributions for the period by 0.5.
4. Add the result to the value of your portfolio at the start of the period.
5. Divide line 2 by line 4.
6. Subtract 1.00 from line 5.
7. Multiply line 6 by 100. The result is your quarterly yield.

Source: *Making the Most of Your Money* by Jane Bryant Quinn (Simon & Schuster, 1991).

What do the numbers mean?

To gauge how your investments are doing, compare your quarterly yield to the current rate of inflation.

To check an individual fund's performance, compare it with other funds of the same type. You'll find average performance data, by fund type, quarterly in *Barron's* magazine.

Educated Investor

Q. What is the new Roth IRA that was passed into law as part of the new tax bill?

A. This retirement vehicle permits most investors to contribute up to $2,000 a year—plus another $500 for the education IRA in after-tax dollars—to an individual retirement account.

Unlike the current IRA, the Roth IRA does not give investors an up-front deduction. Instead, all earnings are exempt from federal taxes. After the money has been in the account for five years, you can withdraw funds to buy your first home or to pay college expenses without paying the 10 percent penalty.

The income limits for eligibility have been raised for this IRA—$95,000 to $110,000 for individuals and $150,000 to $160,000 for couples, more than triple the current limits.

The new law will permit taxpayers to roll money from an existing IRA into the new Roth IRA, provided they pay tax on it first. But once it is rolled over, there will be no taxes due on it ever again.

Incidentally, the tax bill also doubles the limits for the traditional, deductible IRA. Individuals with incomes up to $40,000 and couples up to $80,000 will be eligible for full deductibility. These new limits will be phased in between 1998 and 2004.

Financial Finds

Building Value

The NEA Valuebuilder Mutual Fund Program features 56 portfolios and a free, personalized asset allocation profile. For information about the program—available through NEA's MBC Investor Services Company, an affiliate of NEA's Member Benefits Corporation—call Member Benefits at 800/637-4636, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., or Saturday, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., ET. You can also call to request a free questionnaire that will be computer scored and used to help develop your personal investment plan.

Credit Counseling

If you've gotten behind in your bills and need help negotiating with lenders to lower your monthly payments, contact the nonprofit Consumer Credit Counseling Service. The service is free for general budgeting advice and typically charges a low fee for debt repayment counseling—about $9 a month. If you can't afford to pay, CCCS says it won't turn your away. To locate an office near you, call 800/388-2227.

Consumer Watchdogs

If you've had it with a store or business that's trying to stiff you, you can complain online to the Better Business Bureau (www.bbb.org). Business reliability reports are available for the Boston BBB, which covers Maine, eastern Massachusetts and Vermont, and will be online for 130 bureaus nationwide by the end of this year. You can complain here about problems with charitable solicitations, too. The site also features BBB consumer alerts on recently discovered fraudulent business scams.

Pension Advice

One of the toughest challenges facing women today is a lack of adequate retirement income. If you have questions and concerns about your pension, you can call the Department of Labor's toll-free pension information line at 800/998-7542 and request a variety of helpful brochures. Titles include *Women and Pensions: What Women Need to Know and Do*; *Protect Your Pension: A Quick Reference Guide*; and *Top Ten Ways to Beat the Clock and Prepare for Retirement*.

I N T R O D U C I N G

THE NEA CREDIT CARD WITH TRAVEL REWARDS

Flying for free just got a whole lot easier

1-800-468-7632

Call today and mention priority code Q2CS

Now NEA Members have their own credit card with a travel program that lets them fly free faster than any other card.* With more flexibility and fewer restrictions than other rewards programs, you could be well on your way to a dream vacation in no time.

Just 15,000 points earns you a free round-trip ticket anywhere in the 48 contiguous United States.* You can fly any time – including holidays – and even use points for free car rentals and hotel accommodations. **And that's not all.**

You can also save money with this new NEA Credit Card. You'll get a low 5.9% introductory fixed Annual Percentage Rate (APR) on balance transfers & cash advances for five months and a low variable APR on purchases, currently 15.1%.† And unlike most other cards, you can earn points right away by transferring balances from other accounts to your new NEA Credit Card with Travel Rewards. To top it all off, your first year's membership is absolutely free – after that it's only $20 per year.

To apply for your new NEA Credit Card with Travel Rewards or to convert your current NEA card account, simply call today – and see for yourself how traveling for free just got a whole lot easier.

No other card gets you there faster.

Travel Benefits	**NEA Travel Rewards** All Major Airlines	AMEX Delta SkyMiles® Delta Airlines	Citibank AAdvantage® American Airlines	First Chicago Milage Plus® United Airlines
Free round-trip ticket in the 48 contiguous United States	**15,000** points	25,000 points	25,000 points	25,000 points
Free round-trip ticket to Europe	**35,000** points	50,000 points	40,000 – 60,000 points (changes seasonally)	50,000 points
Annual Fee	1st year **FREE**, $20 thereafter	$55	$50	$60

For the NEA Travel Rewards Program, the corresponding maximum dollar value for the award levels shown above are: 15,000 pts/$500; 35,000 pts/$1,000. For travel within a single zone, the award level and corresponding maximum dollar value is 10,000 pts/$300; for travel within North America and Mexico: 25,000 pts/$600. There may be up to two connections per flight. Annual fees shown are for standard cards only. Information shown in chart is accurate as of 7/24/97, based on an independent telephone survey.

† The annual fee for the NEA Credit Card with Travel Rewards is $20; fee is waived for the first year. The Annual Percentage Rate (APR) for purchases made with the NEA *Platinum Plus* card is 15.1%; for the NEA School Days card or NEA Gold card 15.6%, each APR may vary. The current promotional APR offer for cash advances and balance transfers made with any card is 5.9% through your first five statement closing dates commencing the month after your account is opened. Thereafter, the APR will vary according to the Variable Rate Information disclosures accompanying your card, and will apply to both new and outstanding cash advance balances. The current indexed APR for cash advances and balance transfers is 15.1% for the NEA *Platinum Plus* account, or 15.6% for the NEA School Days or NEA Gold account; APRs may vary. Transaction fee for Bank and ATM cash advances: 2% of each cash advance ($2 minimum, $10 maximum). Transaction fee for credit card cash advance checks: 1% of cash advance ($2 minimum, $10 maximum). Transaction fee for the purchase of wire transfers, money orders, bets, lottery tickets, and casino gaming chips: 2% of each such purchase ($2 minimum, $10 maximum). The transaction fees for specially designated credit card cash advance checks are waived. MBNA may allocate your monthly payments to your promotional APR balance(s) before your non-promotional APR balance(s). Cash advances and balance transfers may not be used to pay off or pay down any other MBNA account.

You will automatically be considered for an NEA *Platinum Plus* account, with a minimum credit line of $5,000. If you do not qualify for the NEA *Platinum Plus* account, you will automatically be considered for a School Days account, with a minimum credit line of $500.

The NEA is not involved in the credit decision process; standard credit procedure is followed. All applications will be subject to a confidential standard review by MBNA America. Absolutely NO membership dues are used to market this program. The NEA Credit Card Program has been developed for NEA members only. If a member decides not to renew his/her membership, that person will no longer be eligible to receive the preferred rates, fees and special promotions (including Travel Rewards) offered through the NEA Credit Card Program. If eligible, a replacement card will be offered. This credit card program is issued and administered by MBNA America Bank, N.A.

* **NEA Travel Rewards Highlights of Terms and Conditions:** These are highlights of the complete Terms and Conditions of the NEA *Travel Rewards* program ("Program"). The Program offers air travel, auto rental and hotel accommodation rewards in exchange for *Travel Rewards Point* earnings *("Point(s)")*.

Air travel rewards consist of a scheduled round-trip ticket for travel within or between two designated zones of the lower 48 states (Zone 1 – locations within the Eastern and Central time zones; Zone 2 – locations within the Mountain and Pacific time zones); plus travel from Alaska and Hawaii. The number of *Points* and corresponding maximum dollar value of tickets ("MDV") required for travel are: for travel wholly contained within Zone 1 or Zone 2: 10,000/$300; between Zones 1 and 2: 15,000/$500; to Alaska, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, Canada, Mexico, the Caribbean, the Bahamas or Bermuda: 25,000/$600; to Europe (and any other international destination which may be available: call NEA Passage Travel, 1-800-NEA-1104, for availability): 35,000/$1,000.

MDV includes taxes and destination fees. Tickets will be Economy class and will be the lowest available published fare at the time of booking. Whenever possible a direct flight will be booked; there is a limit of two connections. Actual date and time of travel are subject to availability. You may select a carrier and/or upgrade to first class travel: If you choose either, you may charge the cost difference to your *Travel Rewards* credit card and earn *Points* for the transaction. Additional terms apply. All reservations and ticketing must be at least 21 days before travel date. All travel must include a Saturday night stay. For international travel, your stay must be at least seven days but no more than 30 days. Other restrictions apply. Common Carrier Travel Accident Insurance coverage is applicable to any airline ticket obtained with *Points* and/or paid for with your *Travel Rewards* credit card. See your card benefits materials for coverage details.

Automobile rental rewards are for midsize vehicles with pickup and return to the same rental location anywhere within the United States. Advance reservations of at least seven days are required and are subject to availability. You must meet all credit, age, and driver requirements in effect at the time and place of rental. 2,000 *Points* are needed for each single day rental (MDV: $60, including tax); 1,000 *Points* for a single weekend day rental (MDV: $35, including tax) and 9,000 *Points* for a seven-day rental period (MDV: $300, including tax). Optional charges are your responsibility. Other conditions apply. Your credit card supplemental collision damage waiver coverage is available.

Hotel accommodation rewards are valid at participating properties in the United States. Advance reservations of at least seven days are required and are subject to availability. There is no minimum stay requirement. Rewards are valid for a standard single- or double-occupancy room with a nightly rate, including tax. Personal, optional and incidental expenses are your responsibility. These are the current requirements for a hotel accommodation reward: for a nightly room rate up to $110: 3,000 *Points* and for a room rate up to $200: 5000 *Points*.

The Program has a yearly fee, currently $20. You may accrue an annual maximum of 70,000 *Points*. Your *Points* may not be combined with anyone else's *Points*. *Points* will expire five years from the end of the year in which they are earned. *Points* have no cash value. *Points* may be earned and redeemed only if your account is in good standing.

Earn one *Point* for every dollar of qualifying balances transferred to the *Travel Rewards* account and for every dollar in Net Purchases. To earn *Points*, a balance transfer to the *Travel Rewards* account must be at least $500, there is no maximum amount. "Net Purchase" means the purchase of goods or services by you or your authorized user (s) with the *Travel Rewards* credit card, less credits and plus or minus any adjustments. Net Purchases does not include finance charges; cash advance transactions (except for qualifying balance transfers); any balance(s) permissibly transferred between MBNA accounts; cash advances redesignated as purchases; the purchase of money orders, wire transfers, bets, lottery tickets, or casino gaming chips; unauthorized charges; credit life insurance premiums; late or over-the-credit-limit fees; and other fees and charges assessed on your account. Fractions of dollar values of Net Purchases will be rounded to the nearest whole dollar.

For current NEA Credit Card customers who convert their account to an NEA Credit Card with Travel Rewards account the minimum balance transfer to earn points is $500; the maximum is $5,000. Balance transfers must occur within 60 days to be eligible to earn points.

There are no exchanges or refunds for no-shows or partially used rewards. Lost, stolen, or otherwise destroyed travel documents may not be reissued or replaced. *Points* may not be combined with any other discounts, special rates, promotions, or other rewards programs offered by MBNA or any other entity, including airline frequent flyer programs or airline credit card programs. No retroactive *Points* will be awarded.

MBNA reserves the right to change any or all of the terms, benefits, or conditions of participation in this program, including, but not limited to, withdrawing, limiting or modifying any reward or increasing the number of *Points* required for any reward. Violations of the terms of this program may result in liability for damages, termination of program eligibility, loss of *Points*, and revocation of issued but unused rewards.

In the event of any cancellation, irregularity, or mishap affecting reward travel or reservations, MBNA will not be responsible for any expenses incurred due to such event(s). All travel-related services are provided by independent contractor(s) who are not affiliated with MBNA. Neither MBNA nor the independent contractor(s) shall be liable for any bodily harm and or property damage that may result from your participation in this program.

You are responsible for determining any tax liability that may result from your participation in this program. The terms of this program are subject to government approval and are void where prohibited by law.

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nea Member Benefits

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Meet

For the past year, Rob Reiner has put movies aside so he can rally support for children from birth to age three.

In years past, director Rob Reiner visited Washington to film hits like The American President *and* A Few Good Men. *These days, he visits the nation's capital to direct a different kind of show.*

Inspired by recent research on brain development, Reiner's busy running a national campaign to educate parents and influence politicians on the importance of the first few years of life.

Reiner has enlisted help from hundreds of organizations—including NEA—and dozens of corporations. Last spring, he produced an ABC special called I Am Your Child.

The topic of early childhood development is, of course, all in the family. Reiner has two young sons, ages 4 and 6, and a third child on the way.

He spoke recently with NEA Today *assistant editor Stefanie Weiss at the Four Seasons hotel in Washington.*

Scott Suchman

Rob Reiner

Getting Kids Ready To Learn

Why focus on children from birth to age three?

I've been thinking about this for almost 20 years now. In my own analysis, it became clear to me that the first two or three years of my life were the most important in making me who I am today.

Then I came across hard, scientific facts to back up what I'd been thinking. It was astounding to me that scientists can prove that the emotional, physical, and intellectual experience a child has in the first three years actually grows the brain and makes neural connections.

That information not only validates what I've been thinking, but clearly points us in the direction that we need to be going as a country.

Where do you think we should we be headed?

Historically, as a society, we haven't paid much attention to the first three years of life. They've always seemed outside the purview of public policy.

But if we could focus in on those three years, we could really make an impact on crime, teen pregnancy, drug abuse, child abuse, welfare dependence, and so on.

I believe we have to make the investment in our children now. It's the economically—and morally—sound choice.

Some say it's not the federal government's job to help parents raise their kids.

I don't think it's the federal government's job either. But I think the federal government can play a part.

I think most people don't want any federal programs shoved down their throats any more—and that's okay. This kind of thing really has to be done on a community-by-community basis.

So where will the money come from?

I realize that there isn't any great will on Capitol Hill to put forth money for these types of programs.

So we've started working with the National Governors' Association. We're working with individual states to talk about making investments in various communities around the country, and we're hooking up with big business.

I think we can get a lot done with partnerships on a state-by-state basis. And, at some point, I think the federal government will see the wisdom of it all and come in and play a part.

What's your ultimate goal?

I'd like to see each community have a comprehensive set of programs that offer health care, quality child care, parent education, and intervention programs for families at risk—and do it in a one-stop shopping way, so that parents can have access to all the services in one place.

I'd like parent education to be seen as something people partake of as a matter of course—not just if you have a troubled child, trouble in your marriage, or trouble in the family. It should be something everybody does because it's a good and a right thing to do.

I'd like to see education earlier than kindergarten and a national standard for quality child care.

What are you doing to reach those goals?

We're trying to establish a model program in New Jersey. We're co-hosting a CEO summit with Kaiser Permanente this winter to talk about the investment.

I'm traveling around the country talking to politicians and business and civic leaders. And, at the same time, our organization is trying to get the word out and keep the drumbeat going.

What's your message to K-12 educators?

I hope educators see the focus on the first three years as an extension of education. And I hope they don't feel threatened if some money needs to be shifted into early childhood programs.

I know everybody's fighting for dollars and trying to keep their programs intact. But, at some point, I think we all have to see that there's wisdom in investing in the first three years of life, and that if we do, it's going to make everybody's job easier.

Why you? Why are *you* taking all this on?

I've been struck by an immutable truth here: The brain grows to 90 percent of its adult size in the first three years.

And, at this stage in my life, I'm in a position where I can actually do something to get the word out. I've been given a tremendous opportunity here. To me, it would be criminal if I didn't take advantage of it.

Are you worried about being labeled "the director-with-a-cause"?

No, because I already have been—people still call me "Meathead." I just have to go about my life and do what I have to do. I can't worry about those things.

What's your next Hollywood project?

I don't know yet. I'm thinking about doing something on the militia movement. Lotta laughs in that one, huh?

For More Information

- Check out the I Am Your Child Web site at www.iamyourchild.org.
- *The First Years Last Forever*, a booklet full of tips for parents and caregivers. Free in English and Spanish. Call 888/447-3400.
- *The First Years Last Forever*, a 28-minute video on early brain development and parenting. Free while supplies last. $5 covers s&h. Call 888/447-3400.
- *I Am Your Child*, a CD-ROM that includes all of the above info—and more. Free while supplies last. $5 covers s&h. Call 888/447-3400.

Debate

Should Kids Read *Goosebumps*?

Mike Lydick

Yes

Suzanne Wargo is a media specialist at William J. Johnston Middle School in Colchester, Connecticut. A member of the Colchester Education Association, Wargo is active on several state-level Association committees. She's also a reporter for the Norwich Bulletin and can be reached at suewargo@aol.com.

Kids love to be scared! From the time babies are aware of their surroundings, we play peek-a-boo with them, hoping to startle them into a giggle. We scare kids at amusement parks, on television, at the movies, and around the campfire—and they love it.

So it's no wonder that R.L. Stine's young adult novels, and particularly his *Goosebumps* book series, are so popular.

From the publication of the first book in 1992, I had a giant waiting list of youngsters eager to check the books out. I couldn't keep the books on the racks, and my daily circulation rate hit new highs.

So when parents ask me if students should be allowed to read *Goosebumps*, I always respond with a resounding "yes." Here's why:

■ *Any child who is reading is an improvement over one who is not.* Kids love to read about scary ideas and scary situations. These books reach them where they are.

Are they great literature? Certainly not. But, given the fast-paced electronic age today's kids are growing up in, *Goosebumps* keeps young people reading—and that's worth a lot.

■ *Books in the* Goosebumps *series aren't harmful.* A fan of scary books myself, I've read a few of them. To me, *Goosebumps* books are fun and a bit silly, but they don't make kids feel genuinely afraid for their safety.

■ *Students will outgrow books by R.L. Stine and learn to love reading.* Like thousands of other adolescents, my own daughter has read more than 50 of Stine's books. Now 15, she's moved on to Mary Higgins Clark. I was stuck myself on Nancy Drew mysteries, but I've moved on to read bigger and greater things. Your students will, too.

■ *With some guidance, parents and teachers can make reading* Goosebumps *an educational experience.* When parents balk at buying yet the zillionth volume, I urge them to start a conversation with their kids about some of the plots—there are occasional morals worthy of discussion.

When parents express frustration over the quality of the content—or lack of it—in the series, I suggest they introduce their kids to Edgar Allen Poe's *The Tell Tale Heart*. I've heard some terrific audio versions guaranteed to pique the imagination of any 9- or 10-year-old.

In the classroom, teachers can capitalize on students' interest by doing a unit on the horror genre. Students can do *Goosebumps* written reports, create art projects, and write letters to Stine himself. I've seen many a young *Goosebumps* aficionado inspired to write the great American horror novel during a unit like that.

■ *Telling kids they can't read something will only increase the attraction.* My mother wouldn't let me watch *The Three Stooges* because she thought it too violent. I grew up with many a young boy my age pretending to poke and slap in imitation of the Stooges' brand of comedy. It only made me more eager to sneak around the rule and find out for myself.

■ *Finally, there's nothing wrong with fear as fun—at any age.* With memories of reading Stephen King's *The Shining* during the blizzard of '78, I still love a scary book and giggle when my daughter plots to jump out at me in the dark when I least expect it.

No

Alberta Graham, now a reading specialist at Lakeview Elementary School in Neenah, Wisconsin, has taught grades 1, 3, 4, and 5 and worked as a reading teacher. An active member of the Neenah Education Association and the Fox Valley Reading Council, Graham can be reached at agraham@vbe.com.

I confess: I'm jealous. R.L. Stine is a prolific writer, knows his audience, and is the beneficiary of a marvelous marketing scheme for *Goosebumps*.

But he's not an educator, and his books have little educational value.

As a reading specialist, I try to get children to read a variety of genres and authors to increase their reading ability and get a well-rounded education.

I want children to read quality fiction and nonfiction books to learn about each other, their school community, and their world. I want them to develop an understanding of other cultures and be introduced to creative and diverse thinking.

When measured against these criteria, the choice of *Goosebumps* as reading material leaves much to be desired.

Now that's not to say that *Goosebumps* has absolutely no value at all. The books are well-orchestrated to sustain interest and keep the reader turning pages. They keep children interested in science fiction engrossed. And the child who reads *Goosebumps* is, at least, reading something.

But Stine's work aims at such a low level, develops little artistic setting, and has few interesting characters and next to no mind-expanding value.

It's great to get children "hooked on books," but Stine is stuck on the "hook," not the "book."

There are many who attack public education in the media as simplistic, faddish, and not rooted in the basics, let alone the classics. The popularity of Stine's work has only helped to strengthen that premise.

Characters in Stine's books don't have real lives with real families and real communities. They live only for their role in the plot development and then are discarded. There is no carryover to develop the family or community spirit that today's children need so desperately.

Stine would be of great assistance to the slow-developing reader if he were to put more picturesque language in his books so that readers could use their imaginations to develop a "movie in their heads" with vivid detail.

But he doesn't. Stine's books, each with the same basic style and format, don't help students open their minds.

They do stop students—captivated by this one genre—from exposing themselves to the vast array of quality reading material that would widen their horizons, not inhibit their thoughts.

Stine engages his readers on only one plane—horror. The videos loosely based on his books are even gorier. They debilitate, rather than strengthen, children's minds.

Although Stine has done well in the marketing field, his books do not produce the reading enhancement that I look for when I'm choosing books for children.

Needless to say, I'm opposed to any series of books that creates a single-genre rut that children have trouble breaking out of.

Stine's books limit the horizons of children's reading. Instead of helping to raise moral fiber, they lower it. Instead of broadening perspectives, they narrow them.

As a reading specialist, I will not spend my hard-earned money on this type of limiting literature.

What's Your Opinion?

Should kids read *Goosebumps*?

To vote, visit our Web site at **www.nea.org/neatoday** and see the results instantly.

Is environmental education scaring our kids to death?

The tally on this Debate question from the last issue of *NEA Today*:
33% Yes **67% No**

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The Coalition for Quality Children's Media is proud to announce the second edition of KIDS FIRST! Directory. Over 700 recommended videotapes and CD-ROMS are included in this edition along with expert guidance from child development and media specialists. This 68 page, four color directory of quality programming for children costs $5, including shipping and handling. To order your copy, call toll free 888/319-KIDS, Dept. NEA, or send a check or money order to KIDS FIRST!, Dept. NEA, PO Box 480255, Kansas City, MO 64148.

PARENT POWER—This publication suggests some reading, writing, math and social studies learning recipe activities at various grade levels. They are designed to be used at home to boost learning and foster the broader "MegaSkills" including responsibility, perseverance, teamwork, and problem solving. These recipes will help adults at home to become more active "teachers" in their children's lives. Please contact NEA's Center for the Revitalization of Urban Education (CRUE) for copies and information at 202/822-7155 or FAX: 202/822-7997; or internet: NEACRUE1@aol.com.

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PROFILES IN COMMUNITIES

More and more people are realizing that children are far more likely to have successful school careers when parents, schools, and communities work in partnerships. "Profiles in Communities" contains descriptions of some successful NEA parent, school, community partnerships. Please contact NEA's Center for the Revitalization of Urban Education (CRUE) for copies and information at 202/822-7155 or FAX 202/ 822-7997 or NEACRUE1@AOL.COM

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See the information box in the lower right hand corner of this page for details.

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Health Resources

Making the Grade: A Guide to School Drug Prevention Programs. The NEA Health Information Network is pleased to support this compilation of comprehensive health programs and drug prevention programs. This guide will assist you in selecting the most appropriate curricula for your school. For copies of *Making the Grade*, contact Drug Strategies, 2445 M St., NW, Suite 480, Washington, DC 20037; 202/663-6090. Cost: 1 to 4 copies @ $12.95 each, 5 and over @ $9.95 each.

BREAST CANCER AWARENESS MONTH

October is breast cancer awareness month. The NEA Health Information Network wants you to know your risks and early detection screening options. Call NEA Health Information Network at 800/718-8387 for a free Breast and Cervical Health Calendar and a list of other materials available to promote early detection in your school community.

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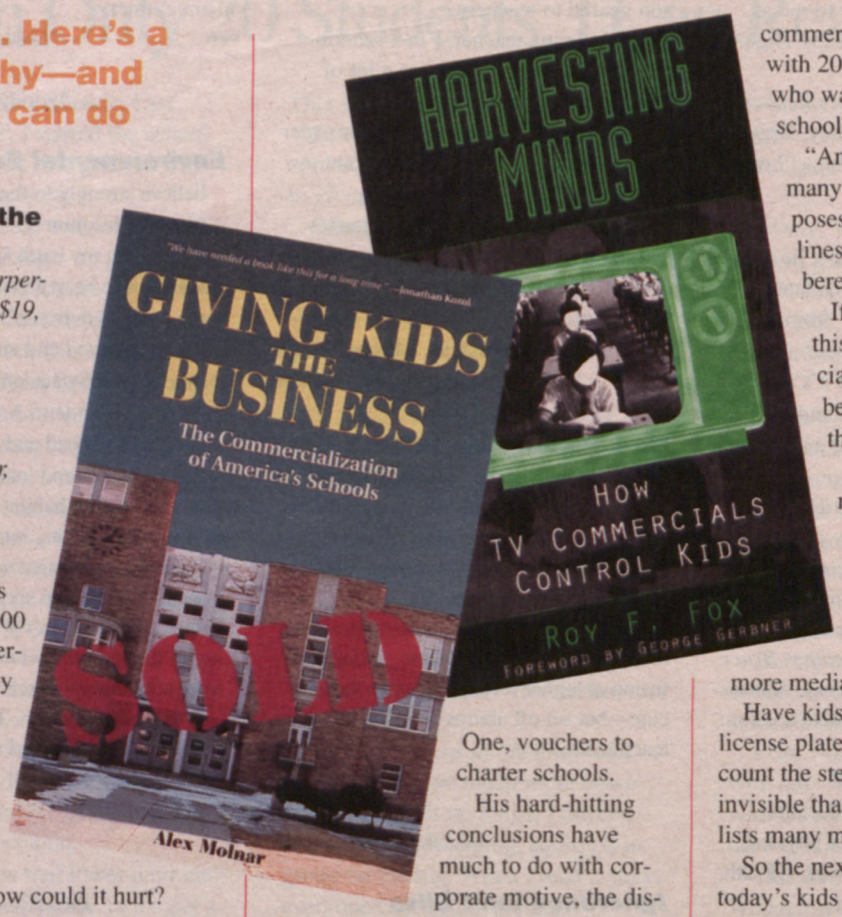
Books

Who Wants $100 Sneakers?

Every kid. Here's a look at why—and what you can do about it.

Giving Kids the Business
Alex Molnar, *HarperCollins, 224 pp., $19, 800/242-7737.*

Harvesting Minds
Roy Fox, *Praeger, 212 pp., $35, 800/225-5800.*



American kids watch 200,000 television commercials—before they reach first grade.

So, the logic goes, what's a few more at school when they're tuned to Channel One? How could it hurt?

Take a minute, put down your clicker, and let the authors of these two books count the ways.

In *Giving Kids the Business*, Alex Molnar takes a long, hard look at what he calls "the schoolhouse sellathon," from corporate freebies to Channel One, vouchers to charter schools.

His hard-hitting conclusions have much to do with corporate motive, the distribution of wealth in America, and—believe it or not—class size. "Plain old public schools with smaller classes," he says, "might be the best investment of all."

Roy Fox, author of *Harvesting Minds*, shares Molnar's outrage about commercialism. After interviews with 200 rural Missouri students who watch Channel One in school, Fox minces no words: "America has not held so many people captive for purposes of selling for profit since lines of ragged slaves clambered up the auction block."

If that doesn't get you, get this: Kids who see commercials at school, Fox says, believe their school *endorses* the products advertised.

It's no surprise that Fox recommends banning advertising in school. What's surprising—and welcome: his smart and practical list of ways to teach kids to become more media literate.

Have kids count ads instead of license plates, he suggests. Have them count the stereotypes and ask what's invisible that's being sold here. Fox lists many more ideas—all worthy.

So the next time you wonder why today's kids want so much stuff, or you think that selling the sides of school buses is no biggy, stop.

When school commercialism crosses the line, Fox reminds us, kids pay—"in time, learning, language, thinking, creating, and maturing."

—Stefanie Weiss

NEA Professional Library Top 10 Bestseller List

1 Pitfalls and Potholes: A Checklist for Avoiding Common Mistakes of Beginning Teachers. Barbara A. Murray and Kenneth T. Murray. ($4.50) The second title in the Checklist Series offers practical advice to new teachers. (#2151-7-10-FB)

2 The First Year Teacher: Teaching with Confidence (K-8). Bosch & Kersey. ($14.95) The ultimate first-year teacher's handbook. (#1862-1-10-FB)

3 Bright Ideas: A Pocket Mentor for Beginning Teachers. Mary Clement. ($4.50) This checklist reveals the secrets of surviving the first year of teaching. (#2153-3-10-FB)

4 Teaching and the Art of Successful Classroom Management, 2nd edition. Harvey Kraut. ($14.95) A must-read for first-year high school teachers. (#2004-9-10-FB)

5 Countdown to the First Day of School. Leo M. Schell & Paul Burden. ($4.50) A must-have checklist for every beginning elementary school teacher. (#2150-9-10-FB)

6 Inspiring Discipline: A Practical Guide for Today's Classrooms. Merrill Harmin. ($10.95) Teachers say, "We want how-to materials on discipline." This book delivers with strategies you can put to use immediately in your classroom. (#2950-X-10-FB)

7 Moving to the Block: Getting Ready to Teach in Extended Periods of Learning Time. Fleming, Olenn, Schoenstein, and Eineder. ($4.50) The ultimate block scheduling checklist, this compact book answers your questions on how, why, and when to consider moving from a traditional schedule to a block schedule. (#2159-2-10-FB)

8 Inspiring Quality in Your School. Robert A. Sullo. ($14.95) This book shows why *you* are the most important person to inspire quality in your school. (#2951-8-10-FB)

9 Portfolio Practices: Thinking Through the Assessment of Children's Work. Steve Seidel, et al. ($14.95) Learn the nuts and bolts of student portfolios and discover fresh ways to think about assessment. (#1858-3-10-FB)

10 Student Portfolios. NEA Teacher-to-Teacher Books. ($9.95) Insights from your colleagues on how to use portfolios to assess and enhance student learning. (#2901-1-10-FB)

This month's rankings are based on last month's sales for all books published by the NEA Professional Library, a service for all 2.3 million NEA members financed solely by the sale of books and other professional development materials to the education community.

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From Hinton to Hamlet
Building Bridges Between Young Adult Literature and the Classics. Sarah Herz with Donald Gallo. *Greenwood, 128 pp., $29.95, 800/225-5800.* A look at how you can use teen lit to teach your middle and high school students to love reading and appreciate quality literature.

Sandi the Sandhill Crane
Colleen Gage. *C and N Books, 42 pp., $9.95 plus $2.50 s&h and 5 percent Nebraska sales tax. Send to Colleen Gage, 5611 West 30th St., Kearney, NE 68847.* A first-"person" look at the life cycle of sandhill cranes. Intended for elementary students.

Youth Soccer Drills
77 Drills for Beginning to Intermediate Players. Jim Garland. *Human Kinetics, 210 pp., $14.95, 800/747-4457, www.humankinetics.com/.* For parents and coaches of soccer players ages five to 12, a series of drills to maximize learning, fun, and developmentally appropriate skills.

Signs of Spring
Patrick Quinn. *Eagle Creek Publications, 156 pp., $7.95 includes s&h, call 612/445-8726 or write to Eagle Creek Publications, 14160 Rolling Oaks Circle, N.E., Prior Lake, MN 55372.* This novel, for kids who read at a grade 4-7 level, tells the story of a 12-year-old hearing-impaired boy as he gains first-hand knowledge of his Ojibwe culture.

American Women Historians, 1700s-1990s
A Biographical Dictionary. Jennifer Scanlon and Shaaron Cosner. *Greenwood Press, 272 pp., $75, 800/225-5800.* A reference book listing hundreds of women—past and present—who've made significant contributions, too often overlooked, to the study of history.

Letters

First-Year Memories

After reading "Welcome Aboard" (Cover story, September), I couldn't help but write.

Five years ago, when I started teaching, I knew I wasn't prepared. Many of my education classes in college were, quite honestly, impractical and insignificant.

I learned on my feet, and I made mistake after mistake. Despite my many successes, the experience jeopardized my confidence, performance, and relationship with the kids. They saw right through me—and I felt that I was completely on my own.

I came through it, but I certainly could have benefited from the help of an experienced mentor. Sad to say, most districts don't give teachers time to share their thoughts, let alone to help one another.

So, to help those who are struggling through their first year without mentors, I've edited my journal notes into a book, *From Teacher to Teacher: What the Colleges Don't Teach Us*. If you're interested, please E-mail me or send a note to Box 388, Albany, WI 53502.

Experienced teachers and new teachers have a lot to learn from one another. Now's as good a time as any to start.

Bob Gentilli
Albany, Wisconsin
bgentill@utelco.tdsnet.com

I read your cover story on mentoring with interest. Because of recent contract negotiations, I'm now particularly interested in what makes one an objectively defined "qualified mentor teacher" and "qualified head/lead teacher."

Members of the Central Linn Education Association negotiated a single-column pay schedule that will be phased in over the next three years. The new system will be tied to levels of "value-added" teacher qualifications and some threshold step increases.

I would appreciate knowing if any NEA members have already accomplished this task. I'd also appreciate hearing from anyone who has an opinion on what these definitions should include.

Please send E-mail or write to me at Central Linn High School, 32433 Highway 228, Halsey, OR 97348.

Bruce Eckhardt
Halsey, Oregon
bruce_eckhardt@centrallinn.k12.or.us

Turn In the Parents

If I tell a student's parents that he or she isn't doing well and then later observe "bumps and bruises" from a parental beating, Norine Dresser (Innovators, September) says it's an indication that I don't understand their culture and that I need to find a different way to talk to parents.

I'm sorry, but I thought that child abuse was illegal and that my obligation was not to understand and accommodate the culture that condones it, but to turn in the parents and protect the child.

Heather Bruce
Lawrence, Kansas
siubhanb@aol.com

Sedentary Students?

Your article on physical education painted a bleak picture of physical education for students nationwide (Health, September). But all is not lost.

At Springer Middle School where I teach, administrators responded to concerns abut the lack of physical education for students. They hired two new health/physical education teachers and included their classes as part of the core curriculum—alongside math, science, social studies, and English.

Now students have physical education classes year-round instead of on a semester-by-semester basis.

Dave Huber
Wilmington, Delaware
AACTchDave@aol.com

Nurture the Nurses

I enjoy receiving *NEA Today*—it has a lot of good advice and useful information geared to teachers.

But I'm not a teacher. I'm a school nurse, and I'm sure there are a lot of other readers who are nurses.

I'd like to see a full page of your paper devoted monthly to issues important to school nurses.

This would be a great help to nurses and to the school staffers who come in contact with us on almost a daily basis.

Donna Crumley
Acushnet, Massachusetts
Donnamcrn@aol.com

No Laughing Matter

An Illinois teacher was incorrect when he interpreted the meaning of the > symbol as "more than" (In the Light Lane, September). The symbol is correctly read as "greater than."

To use incorrect terminology even in the fourth grade is to set students up for confusion at higher levels. His story was cute—but set off alarms as to his ability to teach math.

Sue Rankin
Tulsa, Oklahoma
PRankin647@aol.com

Ignorance Isn't Bliss

I saw the letter from a Michigan reader who was outraged at the prime-time showing of *Schindler's List* (Letters, September)—with all of its "nudity, profanity, and violence."

I'm appalled at such narrow-minded thinking by an educator. I wonder what he thought of the actual events of World War II!

How can we learn from history's mistakes if we are not informed of them? And why not use the vehicle of prime-time television to do the informing?

We've had many holocausts over the course of human history. Perhaps now, with multimedia teaching about these horrors, we will finally be able to call them extinct.

Linda Schuckman-Yori
Ceres, California
lyori@stan-co.k12.ca.us

Environmental Education

I believe strongly in the value of environmental education (Debate, September).

As a result, my earth systems science students have been actively involved in some terrific environmental projects. They've captured and attached satellite telemetry to a Swainson's hawk to trace its migration route to Argentina.

They've designed and are transforming a 12-acre wasteland into an outdoor classroom and nature habitat for scientific studies and a public, interpretive trail.

They monitor native wintering songbirds in nearly 75 sites in six states. And they gather baseline data for entomologists trying to discover the wintering roosts for intermountain monarch butterflies.

And the list goes on. These students are doing good things, and they're learning to be responsive—as well as responsible—citizens.

Ron Hellstern
Logan, Utah
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Operation Rescue

I disagree with the NEA member who supports Operation Rescue's recent tactic—picketing high schools with photos of aborted fetuses—to fight teen pregnancy (Letters, September).

What the writer fails to mention is that Randall Terry and his Operation Rescue zealots are responsible for terrorist and illegal activities.

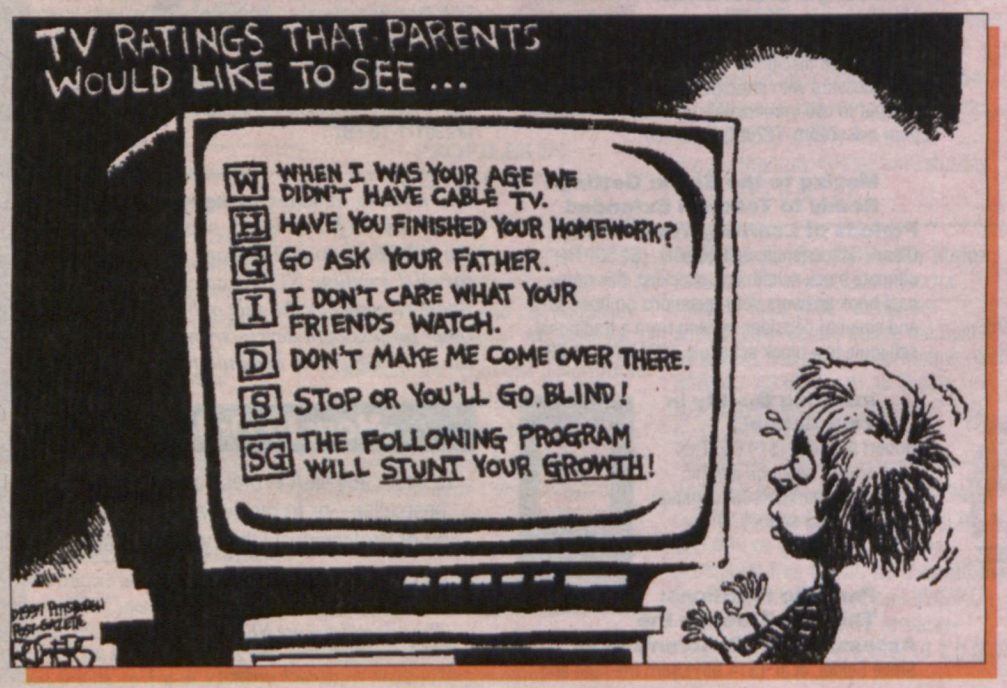
Operation Rescue members continually harass, verbally abuse, and physically prevent women from entering medical facilities, restricting them from their legal right to health care.

If these are the same people the letter-writer wants to applaud, then I say he's the one in need of an education.

Howard Fisher
Vestal, New York

I'm confused. Why does *NEA Today* find Operation Rescue's use of photos of dismembered, aborted fetuses offensive? What do you want the picketers' photos to show? Operation Rescue could have chosen photos of healthy, live babies. But that wouldn't document what abortion is.

In my opinion, *NEA Today* should place the issue of whether high school students should view photos of dismembered, aborted fetuses on the Debate page, not in


TV RATINGS THAT PARENTS WOULD LIKE TO SEE ...
W WHEN I WAS YOUR AGE WE DIDN'T HAVE CABLE TV.
H HAVE YOU FINISHED YOUR HOMEWORK?
G GO ASK YOUR FATHER.
I I DON'T CARE WHAT YOUR FRIENDS WATCH.
D DON'T MAKE ME COME OVER THERE.
S STOP OR YOU'LL GO BLIND!
SG THE FOLLOWING PROGRAM WILL STUNT YOUR GROWTH!

A Letter from: Riverside, California

'With Only 20 Students, I Can Reach Each One'

It seems like a miracle. Last September, I started the school year with 32 first graders. This year, I have only 20.

I've wished for this for as long as I've been teaching—15 years now, all at Woodcrest Elementary School in Riverside, California.

About an hour from both Los Angeles and Palm Springs, Woodcrest sits on a rural edge of town that boasts rolling hills, orange groves, and even a few well-groomed farm animals.

I'm sure you've heard by now that California legislators recently passed a budget that put nearly $1 billion into reducing K-3 class size statewide.

The money came from the state's budget. The motivation? Poor test scores and an intensive year-long lobbying and media campaign waged by members of the California Teachers Association.

Now districts that lower their elementary teacher-student ratios get a $650-per-student payment each year. That money made my wish come true.

Just after winter recess last year, first and second grade classes were reduced to 20 or fewer students.

While the mid-year transition was a bit rough at times, I'm here to tell you the result has been well worth it.

After six months of experience, here are just a few of the benefits of a smaller class:

■ *Fewer students means fewer discipline issues.* I've become used to teaching large classes, and, out of necessity, I've become very good at "managing" all those children.

But with 20 students, I spend very little of my instructional time on classroom discipline. With fewer students in the classroom, it's just so much quieter—which makes the students act much calmer.

■ *There's room to breathe—and learn.* There is so much more space. My students are no longer crowded into a knee-overlapping, squished-in group on the rug. When I read a story, everyone can see the pictures.

We can actually play a game where we all sit in a circle in the classroom. When we move to music, everyone can participate at the same time.

■ *Each student gets a turn to learn by doing.* With a smaller class, each student gets many more opportunities to ask and answer questions, do classroom jobs, read to the whole class, perform in skits, and work on the computer.

■ *I have time to reach each and every student.* To me, the most important advantage of a smaller class is the amount of individualized instruction I'm able to give each student.

I can fine-tune reading groups so that all children receive instruction at their own reading level.

During center time, I can work with cooperative learning groups of just four students each—an ideal number.

I can work one-on-one everyday with kids who need extra help, and, with only 20 students, the ones who need that help are easier to detect.

This fall, administrators at Woodcrest and around the state continue to scramble for space and teachers. We've been told that kindergarten and third grade classes here will be reduced to 20 students at some point in the future.

I know it sounds funny, but in a way, I feel guilty that I get to teach a small class, while so many other teachers at my school, in other California schools, and around the nation are struggling with huge classes.

All classes need to be smaller. I believe that the students who leave classes with 20 or fewer children will be better readers and better students in general, which will make the intermediate grade teachers' jobs much easier.

Will smaller classes be worth the investment? Let the experts collect the test scores. I feel certain that the research will prove what you and I have always known: Kids learn better in smaller groups.

Susan Valliere is a member of the Riverside City (California) Teachers Association. She can be reached at JValliere@aol.com.

the Heroes & Zeroes column.

Donald Seaman
South Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Hall of Fame

I was very pleased to see *NEA Today* list the names of two of the National Teachers Hall of Fame's newest members (Heads Up, September). But what happened to my name as a 1997 inductee?

Thomas Fallon
Woodbury, New Jersey

Editor's note: NEA Today *regrets the error. Mr. Fallon has been an active NEA member for 30 years, and was recently named New Jersey Teacher of the Year and inducted into the National Teachers Hall of Fame.*

Criminal Attitude

I followed the strike in Sandy, Oregon, with real interest and concern (Newsmakers, May). But when I read your article, I was shocked to see you refer to strike-breaking teachers as "criminals of a sort."

You talk about "strong-arm" tactics, but aren't you guilty of the same?

Teachers strike for real reasons. Teachers cross the line for real reasons, too. Your clear "us vs. them" stance divides fellow professionals and represents an attitude I won't stand for.

We are all teachers first.

Heidi Mason
Tenmile, Oregon

Squeaky-Clean Heroes

In a brief mention of John Tesh's good works (Heroes & Zeroes, May), you sneeringly referred to his "squeaky-clean image." Why the negative, back-handed compliment? We could use a lot more heroes with squeaky-clean images.

More and more, it seems that *NEA Today* accentuates the negative and does it in a cutesy way. C'mon, *NEA Today*. Get with it and accentuate the positive.

Richard Birch
Old Zollarsville, Pennsylvania

The Value of Morals

To answer the question "Should morals be taught in the classroom?" (Debate, May), one should study the Holocaust and read *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* by Daniel Jonah Goldhagen.

Such a study shows what happens when a society's institutions—including its schools—fail to teach morals, respect, and tolerance.

Louis Peightal
Indiana, Pennsylvania

There's no such thing as a morals-free school. Schools teach morals—values, character, ethics—every day. And every day, students in school learn about responsibility, honesty, civility, cooperation, self-discipline, and respect for self and others—regardless of their personal belief system.

As soon as students enter their school building, they must conform to a broad range of rules and behavioral standards. Like it or not, morals are being taught.

Recent surveys show that the public likes it. A Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup poll reports that 69 percent of the public think their communities could agree on basic values to be taught in public schools, and, the Character Education Partnership reports, more than 90 percent support public school teaching of such values.

I agree with Theodore Roosevelt, who said, "To educate a person in mind and not in morals is to educate a menace to society."

Susan Nelson
Kane, Pennsylvania

Beyond Borders

I was pleased to see your coverage of activist teachers who have been kidnapped or killed (Newmakers, May).

I strongly believe that if conditions are to improve in Third World countries, citizens, professionals and professional organizations, and unions in other countries need to move beyond their borders.

One of the first steps toward that goal is communication. When reports and stories such as yours are printed, the process begins.

I also add my voice to the belief that when conditions improve in other countries, for their citizens and particularly for their children, our country and our citizens will directly benefit.

Diana Carroll
Durham, New Hampshire

Let's Talk

Share your ideas, comments, and opinions with *NEA Today* in one of five ways:

- By mail: Write to Letters, NEA Today, 1201 16th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036
- By the Web: Go to www.nea.org/neatoday and click on "Submit a Letter to the Editor"
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Letters are edited for length and clarity.

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**_Money_ magazine, July 1997

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